WEST OAKLAND

"A Place to Start From"

(Jack London, 1913)

Research Design & Treatment Plan: Cypress I-880 Replacement Project

Volume I: Historical Archaeology

New Year's Eve, 1911--West Oakland Celebrates the Arrival of Electric Trains on Seventh Street

Prepared for the California Department of Transportation

New Year's Eve, 1911 . . . "Last night the street came into its own again as one of the great commonways of the community, and in its joy at the renaissance flashed forth into a stream of electric light and color that illuminated the heavens. . . . Oakland celebrated the inauguration of the epoch of electricity in her streets last night. Seventh Street, so long the home of the smoking, smashing, grumbling, and wearisome steam engine with its soot and smoke and noise will now become the model new business community with its silent, safe, clean electric trains" (*Oakland Tribune*, January 1, 1912).

A New Year's crowd of happy revelers--perhaps as many as 100,000--gathered in the streets, "paved with a smoothness and evenness of a ballroom floor" by the Southern Pacific as part of their franchise agreement with Oakland. In addition, the railroad agreed to pay for lighting Seventh Street for 35 years. For West Oaklanders it was an affirmation of their important role in the city's future, at a time when the newspaper editorialized, "Only three years away is the big Panama Fair, and only one year away the opening of the Panama Canal. Realizing her destiny as the future great metropolis of the bay region, Oakland plans in 1912 to array herself as a city beautiful as well as a city of business and enterprise" (*Oakland Tribune,* January 1, 1912).

For the revelers in the Seventh Street scene, it was a night to eat, drink and dance to the bands in the street, as they watched through a light mist that passed for rain, the approach of a glimmering of thousands of small lights that outlined all of the details of their first big electric red car, with its exotic overhead pantograph. There were three illuminated big red cars, moving slowly through the center of the excited crowd. As the old steam engine #1904--draped in black crepe and driven by Father Time--puffed along for the last time, every man and woman must have been convinced, as surely as they saw the street light up with electricity, that the future had arrived.

For at least some of the revelers, the novelty of that 1911 New Year's Eve was too grand to cut short at midnight. Vernon Sappers recalled: "For years later, that big celebration was still a very sore subject in our house. My father stayed out dancing in the streets all night long. He didn't come home until Sunday morning. My mother never let him forget it. It was their wedding anniversary, as well."

(Cover photograph, from the collection of Vernon J. Sappers)

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WEST OAKLAND--*A Place to Start From*

Research Design and Treatment Plan

Cypress I-880 Replacement Project

Volume 1: Historical Archaeology

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Alameda County, California

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July 1994

Admonition: Scavenging, bottle digging, and souvenir hunting destroy archaeological sites. They are also illegal. According to the State of California Administrative Code, Title 14, Section 4307: No person shall remove, injure, deface or destroy any object of paleontological, archaeological, or historical interest or value. The State of California Penal Code, Title 14, Section 622.5 states that it is a misdemeanor offense for any person other than the owner to willfully damage or destroy archaeological or historical features on public or privately owned land. Scavenging is also dangerous. Archaeologists use special protective equipment and are trained in health and safety measures. Untrained people have been severely injured when their pits collapse around them. Archaeologists test the soil for contamination prior to digging. Especially in industrial neighborhoods, soils can be dangerous and should not be removed without testing for hazardous materials and the possible use of protective measures. Archaeology classes are available locally. Individuals wishing to dig should seek them out, so that their endeavors do not end with arrest, injury, or sickness.

This report was submitted in July 1994 to the California Department of Transportation, District 4, Oakland, California under contract number 04G957-EP. The contents of the report reflect the views of the authors who are responsible for the facts and accuracy of the data presented herein. The contents do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the State of California or the Federal Highway Administration. This report does not constitute a standard, specification, or regulation. The cost for this archaeological study totalled $140,037.12 and included survey, limited excavation, monitoring of hazardous materials testing, auger testing, research, oral history, analysis, and preparation of reports, planning documents, preliminary reports, and final research volume.

Copies of this report may be obtained at cost by writing to the editor at: Anthropological Studies Center, Foundation Center Building 300, Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, CA 94928

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The I-880 Cypress Freeway Replacement, a project of CALTRANS District 4, will involve reconstruction of a section of freeway in Oakland and Emeryville. This structure will restore continuity and capacity to the highway network lost when the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake destroyed or extensively damaged portions of the Cypress Viaduct. Based on environmental studies and following consultation with the local community, the structure will be rebuilt on a new alignment. A total of 3.1 miles of freeway will be constructed including both elevated and surface sections, plus on and off ramps. A multistory parking garage, surface parking lot, and fire station will also be built to replace existing facilities that will be removed from within the freeway route.

An archaeological sensitivity study was conducted and defined the area of high sensitivity for historical archaeology as lying between Martin Luther King Way, where the project begins, to the intersection of Ninth and Cedar streets, approximately 1.7 miles along the project corridor. North of this point, the alignment overlies immediately pre-World War II San Francisco Bay landfill where important historic archaeological remains are not expected. A separate Research Design and Treatment Plan was prepared for prehistoric archaeology. A total of 43 West Oakland city blocks are crossed by the alignment in this potentially sensitive area. Eleven blocks within this area were eliminated from further study because they either lacked 19th-century construction; were in areas that possess low archaeological research potential, such as railroad lines; contained industries that contaminated the surrounding soil; or would be minimally affected by the proposed freeway construction because only a small portion of the block will be impacted. Four city blocks with minimal construction were studied together as two project blocks, bringing the number of blocks analyzed along the route to 30. Five blocks that will be impacted by other project construction were studied during the review of the draft plan; these blocks are included as project blocks 35 through 39.

Archaeological sites in West Oakland, as in most urban areas, are invisible, buried under modern created land surfaces. For this reason, the preliminary phase of archaeological research consists of using available historical information to develop a predictive model indicating where significant historic properties are likely to exist. The discovery phase of urban archaeological research consists of field checking predictions made on the basis of this archival research. The goals of this document are to identify archaeological test locations where high research and survival potential coincide with project impacts; to provide the historic context, including research questions, evaluation criteria, and data requirements, within which to evaluate properties discovered during testing; and to supply a treatment plan for data recovery for properties that are potentially eligible to the National Register of Historic Places.

Early in the study, the archaeological component of the Cypress Replacement project created a predictive model of the archaeological potential of the project area. Archaeological potential is the likelihood that significant archaeological remains have survived to the present. The predictive model was designed to enable archaeologists to concentrate their efforts in locations where the topography has remained unchanged or to which fill has been added, while avoiding potentially less productive areas, where the original ground surface has been removed or disturbed.

The topography of the project area during the period when potentially important historic-period archaeological deposits may have been being created was compared to that of the more recent past. In this way, the extent of post-depositional disturbance on the potential archaeological remains was defined. The project area was delineated over Sanborn Company insurance maps from 1889 to 1951 to create a precise view of the use of this area during these years.

Detailed archival research aimed at identifying potentially National Register-eligible properties focused on those locations within impact areas specified as having both high survival and research potential. The Cypress Replacement project is likely to encounter archaeological properties that are potentially eligible to the National Register of Historic Places. Test excavations are recommended on portions of 26 of the 35 project blocks. The affected portions of remaining blocks are considered unlikely to contain important remains.

The proposed freeway improvements are divided into contracts designated 'A' through 'G.' Only those portions of the project area treated under contracts 'A' and 'B' are sensitive for historical archaeological remains. Contract 'A' begins at Martin Luther King Way, where the proposed freeway initially follows the line of the existing freeway for about six city blocks, gradually swings south, and ends at Center Street. Contract 'A' includes the removal of existing footings on 11 project blocks and the construction of an elevated structure on 15 project blocks. Test excavation has been recommended on 10 project blocks within contract 'A' in areas where proposed footings will encounter areas with high archaeological research potential.

Contract 'B' involves the construction of a surface freeway from Center Street, where it meets contract 'A,' to Fourteenth Street, five city blocks past the limits of the area of high historic archaeological sensitivity. The proposed structure will pass under the Bay Area Rapid Transit structure and over Seventh Street, which will be realigned and reconstructed so that it may pass underneath I-880. This construction will involve the removal of up to 20 feet of soil. Seventeen project blocks were studied within the sensitive portion of contract 'B'; test excavation is recommended on affected portions of 14 of these project blocks. In total, test excavations are recommended on 24 of the approximately 50 blocks within contracts 'A' and 'B'; no test excavations are recommended within contracts 'C' through 'G.' Test excavations are also recommended on two of the five blocks where other facilities will be built as part of the project.

There is a potential for the discovery of prehistoric cultural remains throughout a large portion of the project area; therefore, testing for prehistoric archaeology will be conducted simultaneously with historic archaeological testing, and monitoring for both will be conducted during construction activities. A separate prehistoric archaeological treatment plan has been prepared by CALTRANS that addresses the issue of late discovery. The significance of archaeological properties is generally evaluated by assessing their potential eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion D; that is, their ability to address important questions in history or prehistory. Preliminary research indicated that this would be the case with the majority of potential properties in the project area. The Section 106 process treats these sites through several distinct stages, including identification, evaluation, assessment of effect, and--where appropriate--treatment, which may include data recovery. At each stage, reports are prepared that provide more information about the properties, and the effect of the proposed action on them, and make recommendations for additional work necessary to complete the Section 106 process. This phased approach can be very time consuming, particularly in cities, where paving and fill necessitate that the identification process involve the kind of subsurface examination that elsewhere is generally reserved for evaluation level excavations.

Due to the extreme time constraints placed upon the Cypress Replacement schedule and to its emergency nature, the project is following a modified approach to Section 106 compliance. For the project, the identification, evaluation, and data recovery phases will be collapsed into a single operation. This will be accomplished by applying the detailed research design presented herein during the identification phase. Employing specific criteria, evaluations will be made during a combined identification/evaluation stage. Deposits that exhibit the specified characteristics will be treated as potentially eligible, and data recovery will be initiated. An important goal of this document is to provide the essential guidance for evaluating National Register eligibility in the form of a research design.

Archaeologists construct contexts through the study of the material cultural of past actuality. While prehistorians are largely confined to material culture as their only data base, historical archaeologists use material culture as their primary data base while deriving their overall context and refining their research goals through the use of the written (and sometimes spoken) record. Because they are tied to specific sites, the contexts constructed through archaeology give access to the lifeways of common people often overlooked in conventional historic studies. The commonplace nature of most material culture--broken dishes, food scraps--likewise enable historical archaeologists to create detailed egalitarian historical constructs of the past that can provide insights not obtainable through documentary sources alone. Archaeology will be particularly important in a place such as West Oakland, which has been largely overlooked by traditional historians. Here evidence from the surviving documentary and archaeological record can be used to understand the lives of West Oakland residents in a depth that would be impossible without the added dimension of material culture. Domestic refuse deposits allow archaeologists to study specific people at specific points in time. Refuse caches

are time capsules that can be analyzed and interpreted to elucidate the everyday lives of people in the past with a depth and richness seldom approached by the written record. Likewise, the material remains of commercial and industrial sites inform us about the lives and conditions within which workers labored, the way work was organized and accomplished, the development of modern technology, and the discard of inferior or unsold products. The study of these sites help to construct the sights, sounds, smells, and hazards of city life.

Fill layers are culturally derived, as opposed to geological strata. Fill buries and protects previous living surfaces. It can be used to address various issues depending upon its nature and content. Cultural strata create a stratigraphic profile that can be read as a history of human events over time at a specific point on the city landscape.

The present report is divided into five chapters. Chapter I introduces the Cypress Replacement project and its expected impacts within the APE, describes the preliminary sensitivity study and approach to Section 106 compliance. Chapter II provides an overview of West Oakland focusing on the project blocks. Chapter III presents a detailed research design. Chapter IV presents a history of each project block, including assessments of archaeological survival and research potential, and makes recommendations for testing. Chapter V presents a methodology for archaeological testing and a treatment plan.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A research project such as this requires the efforts of many people: researchers, writers, consultants, and resource people at institutions both public and private.

CALTRANS staff at both District 4 and Headquarters helped in numerous ways to provide essential project information. In particular, we thank Mara Melandry, Senior Environmental Planner, who got us started on the project and whose always cheerful phone calls we now miss after her transfer; her able replacement Robert L. Gross, Senior Environmental Planner-Archaeology Unit, who guided us the remainder of the way; Janet L. Pape, Associate Environmental Planner/Archaeologist, who managed the archaeological studies and researched project design impacts; Judy Tordoff, Associate Environmental Planner/Historical Archaeologist, for her valued input; Mark Sinnicks, Environmental Planning, for surveying and historic mapping information. Ahmad Rahimi, Lead Engineer, and Hossein Mirzaie, Civil Engineer, from Project Development, provided us with project mapping.

Melena A. Gallagher, Senior Structural Engineer, and Chris Koukis, Supervising Construction Engineer, from BART provided us with auger boring logs and details on BART construction.

The recent pioneering research in Oakland history--particularly in the Oakland Point area--accomplished by the Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey, coordinated by Gary Knecht, with Betty Marvin as Architectural Historian, has been the key that unlocked many research doors. This detailed survey was brought together under the auspices of the California Department of Transportation and printed in 1990. The initial problem of establishing an identifiable population in the 19th century that was keyed to specific street addresses throughout the 35-block survey for the Cypress I-880 Replacement project was solved by a citation note in the four-volume survey; a single set of the 1884 Tax Assessor Block books included a list of owners and tenants with occupations given in many cases. Gary Knecht, Coordinator of the Oakland City Planning Department, made this unique set of assessor block books available to research teams, including finding library space that could accommodate these large books. Betty Marvin very graciously answered questions that arose and aided the team in deciphering abbreviations and understanding the data.

Mr. William Sturm, Director of the Oakland History Room, has been helpful in locating the most useful archival sources on West Oakland. Of particular value was the subject and name index system, (which continues to grow under Mr. Sturm's direction) that locates articles as well as the more general run of newspaper accounts over the past 140 years. The Oakland History Room proved to be the single most valuable resource for understanding Oakland's past--particularly as it has forged the accurate connection between the adjacent Newspaper Room and its own bibliographies and index files. Mr. Sturm also opened his photographic archives on West Oakland for this project.

Mr. Robert L. Haynes, Executive Director, and Carol Bacigalupi, Collections Assistant, of the Northern California Center for Afro-American History and Life, made their many boxes of papers and pictures regarding C.L. Dellums available for research. Susan Parker Sherwood, Archivist, of the Labor Archives and Research Center of San Francisco State University was both helpful and enthusiastic in making these specialized archives available. Laura Burley, Archivist of the Alameda County Central Labor Council, provided information on resources in her facility. Archie Green reviewed portions of this manuscript as work in progress and provided many valuable suggestions. Jean Robinson provided information on the Dellums family, their background and activities and graciously gave permission to use photographs from her personal collection.

Photographs of Jack London and his home came through the help of Glenn Burch, Historian for the California Department of Parks and Recreation. Other West Oakland views came through the help of librarians at the Bancroft Library at the University of California.

For most of the photographs in this survey we are indebted to Vernon J. Sappers, who started taking pictures of West Oakland when he was a boy, and has never stopped adding to his burgeoning collection of prints, glass negatives, albums, and photographic collections of individuals who through the years recorded various aspects of life in and around Oakland. By 1993 his collection is so large that it would overwhelm research requests except for the fact that he has separated it in rational fashion (albums by subject are filed in different rooms in his home) and he keeps labeling individual photographs as he discovers more about the images. Vernon Sappers has protected his prints and negatives up to museum standards--but generously made them available for research and publication.

Much of the quality of human understanding--which is what history is all about--came from the voices of Vernon J. Sappers (as recorded in his living room) and Jack London, who wrote his West Oakland observations down and persisted, in spite of heavy obstacles, until they were published.

This volume is the product of the skills of many individuals. Authorship has been indicated by chapter and/or section in the Table of Contents. Nancy Olmsted and Roger Olmsted directed the historical research that was undertaken by our able researchers: Katherine Johnson, Anmarie Medin, Will Spires, and Aicha Woods. Nancy also wrote most of the photo captions and designed the photo layouts. The excellent, computer-generated graphics in this report were created by Stuart Guedon and Melody Tannam, of Basin Research Associates. Elaine-Maryse Solari again agreed to help assemble and format the References Cited section. As usual, Suzanne B. Stewart, of Stewart/Gerike Consultants, improved the quality of this product through her excellent technical editing and critical review.

The Editor and Authors

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY iii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS vii

CHAPTER I Introduction *by Mary Praetzellis, Jack Mc Ilroy, and Janet Pape*
Project Description and Location 1
Construction Impacts and Area of Potential Effect 2
Previous Studies 4
Modified Approach to Section 106 5
Report Goals 6
Report Format 7

CHAPTER II History of West Oakland *by Nancy Olmsted, Roger W. Olmsted*
Introduction, Scope & Method 9
Voices Describe West Oakland 14
The Natural Site 21
The Project Area on the 1857 Coast Survey Map 23
The Marsh Transformed 24
The Rancho Period: Peraltas & Squatters (1822-1852) 27
The Legacy of Don Luis Peralta 27
Land Disputes & the Peralta Rancho (1852-1863) 35
The Founders of Oakland 36
The Possibilities of Growth: West Oakland in 1870 43
The Transcontinental Railroad Reaches Oakland 51
Historical Context of Railway Development 51
Ferries & Trains to Oakland Point 52
Oakland as the Transcontinental Terminus 55
The Railroad as an Employer 62
The Railroad & Its Workers 65
Anti-Chinese Agitation 66
The Workingmen's Party 68
The American Railway Union Strike of 1894 71
Women & the ARU Strike 77
The 1911 System Federation Strike 82
The Patterns of a Growing Community 87
A Community of Immigrants (1880-1910) 97
The Melting Pot 97
Americans Move West 111
Economics of Survival 114
19th-Century Capitalists in West Oakland 122
Shared Values & Social Institutions 127
Hotels & Lodging Houses Along Seventh Street *by Aicha Woods* 139
Lodging Houses Vital to the Economy & Social Life 139
Early Hotels (1870-1880) 143
Accommodating the Flood (1890-1910) 155
Seventh Street under BART in the 1990s 160

The Industrialization of West Oakland (1906-1945) 161
The New Century 161
The Railroad Electrified, 1911 164
The Great War & Its Consequences in West Oakland 166
Postwar Problems 171
The Women's Domestic-Reform Movement in Oakland: 1880-1910 *by Aicha Woods* 175
Introduction 175
A Sampling of Women's Work and Domestic Reform in Oakland 176
The Temperance Movement in Oakland 177
Working Women's Club: The Meaning of Women's Work 178
A Season of Women's Congresses 183
The Strike and the Ladies' Cooperative Aid Society 185
West Oakland through the Eyes of Domestic Reformers 186
West Oakland Atheneum 188
The West Oakland Home 189
The Manse Settlement 190
The West Oakland Vacation School 192
Sunshine Corner 193
The Cooking School-Oakland Club 198
Response to Domestic Reform in West Oakland 200
The Immigrant Woman's Response 201
Recommendations for Further Research 202
West Oakland and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters *by Will Spires* 205
George Pullman and the Pullman Palace Car Company 205
A. Philip Randolph: The Harlem Renaissance Comes to West Oakland 208
Morris "Dad" Moore: A Patriarch of African-American Labor in West Oakland 209
C.L. Dellums: West Oakland's Own National Leader 211
The BSCP Strike: 1928-1937 216
Aftermath of the Strike 218
Tributes to Three Men 220

CHAPTER III Research Context *by Mary Praetzellis and Adrian Praetzellis*
Introduction 225
Research Framework 225
NRHP Criteria for Evaluation 225
Contextual Approach to Evaluation 226
Modernization, Victorianism, and Working-Class Culture 227
Modernization 228
Victorian Values and Practices 229
Working-Class Cultures and Resistance 230
Archaeology and Material Culture Studies 232
Archaeological Formation Processes 234
Property Types 235
Domestic Occupation Types 235
Commercial Sites 236
Industrial Sites 236
Landfills/Dumps 237
Integrity 237
Research Themes 237
Theme A: Consumer Behavior/Strategies 238
Theme B: Ethnicity/Urban Subcultures 242
Theme C: Industrialization/Technology 246

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY iii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS vii

CHAPTER I Introduction *by Mary Praetzellis, Jack Mc Ilroy, and Janet Pape*
Project Description and Location 1
Construction Impacts and Area of Potential Effect 2
Previous Studies 4
Modified Approach to Section 106 5
Report Goals 6
Report Format 7

CHAPTER II History of West Oakland *by Nancy Olmsted, Roger W. Olmsted*
Introduction, Scope & Method 9
Voices Describe West Oakland 14
The Natural Site 21
The Project Area on the 1857 Coast Survey Map 23
The Marsh Transformed 24
The Rancho Period: Peraltas & Squatters (1822-1852) 27
The Legacy of Don Luis Peralta 27
Land Disputes & the Peralta Rancho (1852-1863) 35
The Founders of Oakland 36
The Possibilities of Growth: West Oakland in 1870 43
The Transcontinental Railroad Reaches Oakland 51
Historical Context of Railway Development 51
Ferries & Trains to Oakland Point 52
Oakland as the Transcontinental Terminus 55
The Railroad as an Employer 62
The Railroad & Its Workers 65
Anti-Chinese Agitation 66
The Workingmen's Party 68
The American Railway Union Strike of 1894 71
Women & the ARU Strike 77
The 1911 System Federation Strike 82
The Patterns of a Growing Community 87
A Community of Immigrants (1880-1910) 97
The Melting Pot 97
Americans Move West 111
Economics of Survival 114
19th-Century Capitalists in West Oakland 122
Shared Values & Social Institutions 127
Hotels & Lodging Houses Along Seventh Street *by Aicha Woods* 139
Lodging Houses Vital to the Economy & Social Life 139
Early Hotels (1870-1880) 143
Accommodating the Flood (1890-1910) 155
Seventh Street under BART in the 1990s 160

The Industrialization of West Oakland (1906-1945) 161
The New Century 161
The Railroad Electrified, 1911 164
The Great War & Its Consequences in West Oakland 166
Postwar Problems 171
The Women's Domestic-Reform Movement in Oakland: 1880-1910 *by Aicha Woods* 175
Introduction 175
A Sampling of Women's Work and Domestic Reform in Oakland 176
The Temperance Movement in Oakland 177
Working Women's Club: The Meaning of Women's Work 178
A Season of Women's Congresses 183
The Strike and the Ladies' Cooperative Aid Society 185
West Oakland through the Eyes of Domestic Reformers 186
West Oakland Atheneum 188
The West Oakland Home 189
The Manse Settlement 190
The West Oakland Vacation School 192
Sunshine Corner 193
The Cooking School-Oakland Club 198
Response to Domestic Reform in West Oakland 200
The Immigrant Woman's Response 201
Recommendations for Further Research 202
West Oakland and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters *by Will Spires* 205
George Pullman and the Pullman Palace Car Company 205
A. Philip Randolph: The Harlem Renaissance Comes to West Oakland 208
Morris "Dad" Moore: A Patriarch of African-American Labor in West Oakland 209
C.L. Dellums: West Oakland's Own National Leader 211
The BSCP Strike: 1928-1937 216
Aftermath of the Strike 218
Tributes to Three Men 220

CHAPTER III Research Context *by Mary Praetzellis and Adrian Praetzellis*
Introduction 225
Research Framework 225
NRHP Criteria for Evaluation 225
Contextual Approach to Evaluation 226
Modernization, Victorianism, and Working-Class Culture 227
Modernization 228
Victorian Values and Practices 229
Working-Class Cultures and Resistance 230
Archaeology and Material Culture Studies 232
Archaeological Formation Processes 234
Property Types 235
Domestic Occupation Types 235
Commercial Sites 236
Industrial Sites 236
Landfills/Dumps 237
Integrity 237
Research Themes 237
Theme A: Consumer Behavior/Strategies 238
Theme B: Ethnicity/Urban Subcultures 242
Theme C: Industrialization/Technology 246

Theme D: Urban Geography 248
Theme E: Waste Disposal--Dumps *by Jack Mc Ilroy* 250
Theme F: Interpretive Potential 253

CHAPTER IV: Block Histories and Testing Recommendations *by Mary Praetzellis, Roger W. Olmsted, Adrian Praetzellis, Jack Mc Ilroy, and Anmarie Medin*
Introduction 255
Existing Conditions and Constraints 256
Geological and Geotechnical Study of Project Area *by Janet Pape* 256
Disturbance by *Jack Mc Ilroy* 259
Block by Block 264
East of Market Blocks 1, 2, and 3: Built Environment and Social Setting 264
Block 1 265
Block 2 268
Block 3 270
West of Market Street to Linden, Blocks 4, 5, and 6: The Built Environment and Social Setting 273
Block 4 274
Block 5 279
Block 6 282
West of Linden, South of Seventh Street, Blocks 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 14: The Built Environment and Social Setting 286
Blocks 7 and 8 287
Block 9 291
Block 10 293
Block 11 295
Block 14 296
Down by the Railroad Yards, Blocks 15, 16, and 17: The Built Environment and Social Setting 300
Block 15 300
Block 16 302
Block 17 304
Oakland Point South of Seventh Street, Blocks 18, 19, 20, and 21: The Built Environment and Social Setting 307
Block 18 309
Block 19 311
Block 20 313
Block 21 317
Seventh Street at Oakland Point, Blocks 22, 23, 24, 25, and 29: The Built Environment and Social Setting 320
Block 22 321
Block 23 325
Block 24 329
Block 25 332
Block 29 337
Oakland Point North of Seventh Street, Blocks 27, 28, 30, 31, 33, and 34: The Built Environment and Social Setting 342
Block 27 343
Block 28 344
Block 30 348
Block 31 350
Block 33 351

Block 34 353
Additional Blocks, Blocks 35, 36, 37, 38, 39 355
Block 35 355
Block 36 359
Block 37 365
Block 38 371
Block 39 376

CHAPTER V Evaluation and Treatment Plan *by Mary Praetzellis and Adrian Praetzellis*
Introduction 381
Investigation Standards 381
Testing Methodology 381
Demolition and Construction Monitoring 383
Archaeological Testing 384
Historical Research 386
Evaluation Procedures and Criteria 386
Assessing Relative Archaeological Research Potential 387
Report 389
Treatment Plan 389
Treatment Options 390
Field Excavation Strategies 390
Pollen Sampling Methods 392
Artifact Cataloging Procedures 392
Artifact Analysis 393
Analysis of Zooarchaeological Remains 394
Historical Research 395
Treatment of Human Remains, Burial Goods, and Items of Cultural Patrimony 396
Treatment of Historic Properties Discovered During Construction 396
Ownership and Curation of Archaeological Materials 397
Report and Dissemination of Results 397

REFERENCES CITED 399

LIST OF FIGURES follows page

Figure 1 Cross Section through typical spread/pile bent 2

LISTS OF MAPS follows page
1 Project Vicinity xv
2 Project Location 2
3 Cypress Reconstruction Project 8
4 1857 Coast Survey Map 24
5 Historic Atlas Map of 1878 with Numbered Blocks 98
6 Block 1, 1889 Sanborn Map, Showing Proposed and Existing Footings, and Proposed Archaeological Test Locations 266
7 Block 2, 1889 Sanborn Map, Showing Proposed and Existing Footings, and Proposed Archaeological Test Locations 268
8 Block 3, 1889 Sanborn Map, Showing Proposed and Existing Footings, and Proposed Archaeological Test Locations 270
9 Block 4, 1889 Sanborn Map, Showing Proposed and Existing Footings, and Proposed Archaeological Test Locations 276

10 Block 5, 1889 Sanborn Map, Showing Proposed and Existing Footings, and Proposed Archaeological Test Locations 280
11 Block 6, 1889 Sanborn Map, Showing Proposed and Existing Footings, and Proposed Archaeological Test Locations 282
12 Block 7, 1912 Sanborn Map, Showing Proposed and Existing Footings, and Proposed Archaeological Test Locations 288
13 Block 8, 1912 Sanborn Map, Showing Proposed and Existing Footings, and Proposed Archaeological Test Locations 290
14 Block 9, 1902 Sanborn Map, Showing Proposed and Existing Footings, and Proposed Archaeological Test Locations 292
15 Block 10, 1902 Sanborn Map, Showing Proposed and Existing Footings, and Proposed Archaeological Test Locations 294
16 Block 11, 1902 Sanborn Map, Showing Proposed and Existing Footings, and Proposed Archaeological Test Locations 296
17 Block 14, 1902 Sanborn Map, Showing Proposed and Existing Footings, and Proposed Archaeological Test Locations 298
18a Block 15N, 1912 Sanborn Map, Showing Proposed Footings and Proposed Archaeological Test Locations 300
18b Block 15S, 1912 Sanborn Map, Showing Proposed Footings and Proposed Archaeological Test Locations 300
19a Block 16E, 1912 Sanborn Map, Showing Proposed Footings and Proposed Archaeological Test Locations 302
19b Block 16b, 1912 Sanborn Map, Showing Proposed Footings and Proposed Archaeological Test Locations 302
20 Block 17, 1889 Sanborn Map, Showing Proposed Right of Way and Proposed Archaeological Test Locations 304
21 Block 18, 1889 Sanborn Map, Showing Proposed Right of Way and Proposed Archaeological Test Locations 310
22 Blocks 19 (bottom) and 21, 1889 Sanborn Map, Showing Proposed Right of Way and Proposed Archaeological Test Locations 312
23 Block 20, 1889 Sanborn Map, Showing Proposed Right of Way and Proposed Archaeological Test Locations 314
24 Blocks 22 (bottom) and 24, 1889 Sanborn Map, Showing Proposed Right of Way and Proposed Archaeological Test Locations 322
25 Blocks 23 (bottom) and 25, 1889 Sanborn Map, Showing Proposed Right of Way and Proposed Archaeological Test Locations 326
26 Block 29, 1889 Sanborn Map, Showing Proposed Right of Way and Proposed Archaeological Test Locations 338
27 Blocks 27 (bottom) and 31, 1889 Sanborn Map, Showing Proposed Right of Way and Proposed Archaeological Test Locations 342
28 Blocks 28 (bottom) and 33, 1889 Sanborn Map, Showing Proposed Right of Way and Proposed Archaeological Test Locations 346
29 Block 30, 1889 Sanborn Map, Showing Proposed Right of Way and Proposed Archaeological Test Locations 348
30 Block 34, 1889 Sanborn Map, Showing Proposed Right of Way and Proposed Archaeological Test Locations 354
31 Block 35, 1902 Sanborn Map, Showing Proposed Archaeological Test Locations 356
32 Block 36 (bottom) and 37, 1889 Sanborn Map, Showing Proposed Archaeological Test Locations 360
33 Block 38, 1889 Sanborn Map, Showing Proposed Archaeological Test Locations 372
34 Block 39, 1889 Sanborn Map, Showing Proposed Archaeological Test Locations 378

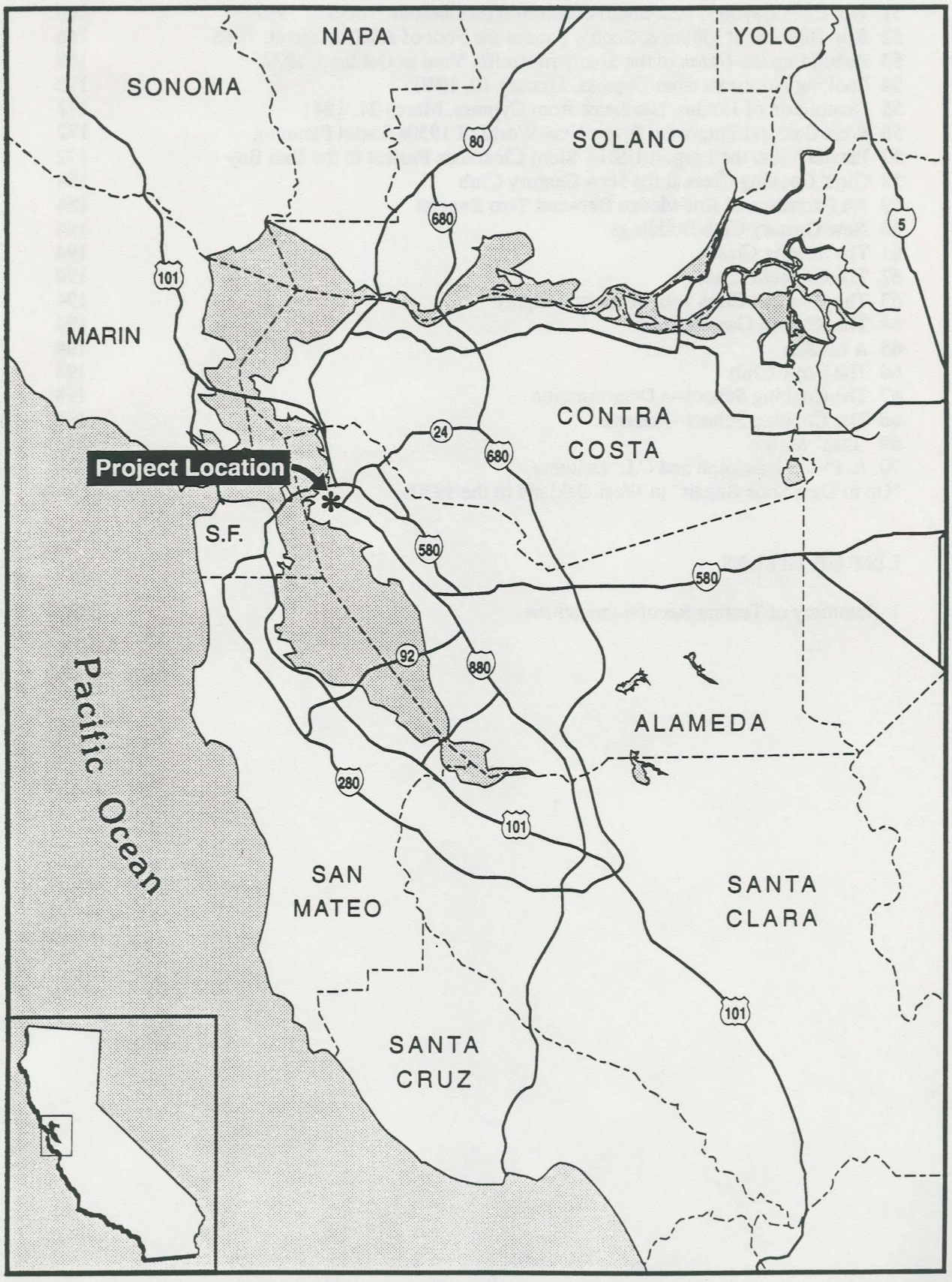
LIST OF PLATES

		follows page
	New Year's Eve, 1911--West Oakland Celebrates the Arrival of Electric Trains	Cover
1	Josef Sappers & Catherine Peters on their Wedding Day, January 1906	14
2	Vernon J. Sappers at Rio Vista Railroad Museum in 1988	14
3	Jack London's Boyhood Home at 807 Pine Street	16
4	Jack London's Home on Adeline, near Seventh Street	16
5	Jack London, age 17	16
6	Cottrell Lawrence Dellums	18
7	Minturn and *Erastus Corning*, July 1852	40
8	Snow & Roos Birdseye View of West Oakland, 1870-71	44
9	Central Pacific Railroad West Oakland Yards in the 1870s	54
10	Oakland Long Wharf in 1878	58
11	Oakland Long Wharf, circa 1905	58
12	The Oakland Mole in 1923	60
13	The Oakland Mole in the 1880s	60
14	*Contra Costa II* Under Construction, Southern Pacific Shipyard in 1914	62
15	*Contra Costa II* Ferries Passenger Train across Carquinez Straits	62
16	West Oakland Roundhouse in the 1870s	66
17	Switching Yard Crew in the 1880s	66
18	Master Mechanic McKenzie and Lieutenants, 1898	68
19	Carshop Workers in West Oakland in 1898	68
20	Railroad Yards, West Oakland, Where the Trains are Tied Up, July 3, 1894	72
21	West Oakland--A Mob: Local Trains Stopped, July 5, 1894	72
22	The Great Body of Oakland Strikers, July 5, 1894	72
23	Alameda "Cannon Ball" Train Stopped by Human Barricade, July 5, 1894	74
24	Strike in Oakland Develops Violence, July 13, 1894	74
25	Second Artillery Regiment Patrols West Oakland Yards, July 14, 1894	74
26	Cavalry Charging Oakland Strikers at Goss & Cedar Street, July 18, 1894	76
27	How a Blockade Was Broken by a Woman, July 3, 1894	76
28	Ladies' Sympathetic League Meets Every Day at Bartlett Hall	76
29	Looking East on Seventh Street, from Pine towards Wood circa 1900	90
30	East on Seventh Street, near Pine in 1940	90
31	Third and Filbert in 1931	112
32	Eighth and Myrtle in 1919	112
33	Oakland Estuary--Safe Winter Haven, circa 1905	118
34	The Alaska Packer's Fleet in the Oakland Estuary, circa 1900	118
35	The McDermott House Entrance in the 1880s	122
36	Front Parlor of the McDermott House in West Oakland	124
37	Rear Parlor of the McDermott House in West Oakland	124
38	Labor Day 1906--A Proud Day for West Oakland Mechanics	128
39	The Southern Pacific's Volunteer Fire Brigade, 1903	128
40	Shellmound Park Merry-Go-Round, circa 1890	132
41	Looking Up Pine Street towards Seventh, circa 1923	134
42	Looking West from Cedar Street towards Bay Street in 1925	144
43	The Steam Train Makes a Lot of "Oakland Dinge" . . . . in the 1880s	146
44	Laying Track on Seventh Street for the New Red Train Service in 1938	146
45	Boarding House Row on Seventh Street, past Pine, circa 1912	148
46	George Godfrey's Charter Oak Hotel of 1873 Remains Intact in 1940	150
47	Looking East from Filbert Towards Market, 1911	150
48	First Electric Train Run by Southern Pacific on Seventh Street, 1911	164
49	Interior of the Oakland Mole Terminal, circa 1931	164
50	The *Sacramento* Pulls into Oakland	164

51 Workmen Laying Track South of Seventh on Chestnut Street in 1919 166
52 Ship Builders at Moore & Scott's Yard at the Foot of Adeline Street, 1918 166
53 Rebuilding the *Ukiah* in the Southern Pacific Yard in Oakland, 1922 168
54 Looking Northeast from Cypress, January 10, 1940 172
55 Demolition of Homes, Northeast from Cypress, March 21, 1941 172
56 West Oakland Enters the Brave New World of 1930s Social Planning 172
57 Peralta Villa, the Largest USHA Slum Clearance Project in the East Bay 172
58 Girls' Cooking Class at the New Century Club 184
59 An Exchange of Knowledge Between Two Experts 184
60 New Century Club Buildings 194
61 The Sewing Class 194
62 The Garment Class 194
63 The Garment Class with Work on Display 194
64 The Kitchen Garden Class 194
65 A Lesson 194
66 The Boys' Club 194
67 The Cooking School--a Demonstation 198
68 The Cooking School--Practice 198
69 "Dad" Moore 210
70 A. Philip Randolph and C.L. Dellums 220
"Up to Date Shoe Repair" in West Oakland in the 1930s Back Cover

LIST OF TABLES

1 Summary of Testing Recommendations 382



Map 1: Project Vicinity

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION by Mary Praetzellis, Jack Mc Ilroy, Janet Pape

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION

The I-880 Cypress Freeway Replacement project area is located in the West Oakland portion of the City of Oakland and in the City of Emeryville, near the east shore of San Francisco Bay (Map 1). The main purpose of the project is to restore continuity and capacity to the interstate and regional highway network that was lost when the I-880 link between 18th and 34th streets in Oakland was destroyed by the Loma Prieta earthquake and remaining portions of the Cypress Viaduct were extensively damaged and had to be removed. Based on environmental studies and following consultation with the local community, the structure will be replaced by a new facility on a different alignment. The alignment for the facility replacement begins at the I-880/I-980 Interchange in the vicinity of Martin Luther King Way and Seventh Street. It travels westward along the existing I-880 right-of-way between Seventh and Fifth streets, then curves southerly across Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) between Union and Adeline streets to Third and Cypress. It runs south of Third Street through the Southern Pacific Railroad yard, curving north to the rear of the Post Office at Wood Street to re-cross Seventh between Pine and Bay streets. The alignment continues north across Seventh Street to parallel the Southern Pacific yard just east of the Oakland Army Base to West Grand Avenue. The proposed freeway branches in the vicinity of West Grand Avenue, connecting northward to the Distribution Structure and westward to the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge Toll Plaza (Map 2).

The proposed structure consists of three mixed-flow lanes in each direction from I-880/I-980 to the West Grand Avenue interchange where the alignment splits into two connectors. Two mixed flow lanes in each direction will join the Interchange to the Distribution Structure. The connector to the Bay Bridge will consist of two mixed flow lanes in each direction with a high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane in the westbound direction.

A new frontage road will be constructed along the east side of I-880. It will begin at the intersection of the northbound I-880/Seventh Street Off Ramp and Seventh Street, and proceed parallel to I-880. As part of the frontage road work, an intersection with Tenth Street will be constructed. Tenth Street will be reconstructed to approximately 75 feet southeast of the curb returns. An intersection with Fourteenth Street will also be constructed. As well as the intersection, Fourteenth Street will be reconstructed between Wood Street and the Frontage Road. A route will be built to provide access to Southern Pacific's yard from Seventh Street.

Replacement of the freeway will require the relocation of Fire Station Number 3 to Mandela Parkway (Cypress Street) and Fourteenth Street, the construction of a parking garage at Wood and Seventh streets, and the construction of a park and landscaping below Third Street between Center and Peralta streets.

Demolition of houses, small stores and industrial buildings will be required along sections of the alignment, mostly north of Seventh Street between Wood and Bay streets, but also south of Fifth Street between Magnolia and Cypress. Demolition of the extant section of I-880 east of Kirkham Street began in early 1994. Hazardous material and engineering studies have been conducted concurrently with the historical and archaeological research documented in this report. A hazardous material testing program will not be completed prior to the submittal of this Treatment Plan.

Construction Impacts and Area of Potential Effect

The Area of Potential Effect (APE) for the I-880 project was set in consultation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) as the limits of work which are within the right-of-way plus permanent and temporary construction easements at various locations. An archaeological sensitivity study was conducted and defined the area of historic archaeological interest as lying between Martin Luther King Way, Fifth, and Sixth streets and roughly the intersection of Chase and Cedar streets (Mc Ilroy 1993). North of this point, the alignment overlies immediately pre-World War II San Francisco Bay landfill and has low sensitivity for historic archaeological remains. Additional blocks within the area defined as sensitive were eliminated from study because they either lacked 19th-century construction, contained industries that would have produced contaminated soils, or would not be affected by the proposed freeway because only a small portion of the block that lacked sensitivity (i.e., building facade) will be impacted. Volume II contains a treatment plan for prehistoric archaeology.

The proposed freeway improvements are divided into contracts designated 'A' through 'G.' Only contracts 'A' and 'B' are sensitive for historic archaeological remains. Contract 'A' consists of the construction of a new I-880 viaduct with four ramps and some local street relocations. The new viaduct will have six lanes on a single deck beginning with a conform to the existing structure. It will be designed to accommodate future HOV lanes. The replacement structure will follow the original alignment, along Sixth Street, then begin a gradual southward swing toward the Southern Pacific Transportation Company's West Oakland yard. The proposed facility will be an elevated structure at the connection of I-880 and I-980. It will cross over Market Street, Adeline Street and the BART line, and come to grade in the vicinity of Third and Center streets. There will be four ramps constructed in this contract. They are the Adeline Street Off Ramp, Adeline Street On Ramp, Union Street Off Ramp, and the Union Street On Ramp. As part of the Adeline interchange's construction, Adeline Street and Middle Harbor Road will be reconstructed between Fifth and Seventh and Third and Fifth, respectively. As part of the Union interchange construction, Fifth Street will be reconstructed from the Nelson Mandela Parkway to Adeline Street. It will be built with a new alignment and much wider. Union Street will also be reconstructed between Third Street and Seventh Street with a discontinuity at the freeway due to the Union Street Ramp's location at Fifth Street. To avoid a dead end on the

I-880 CYPRESS REPLACEMENT

SCALE IN FEET 0 1200 2400

LEGEND

MIXED FLOW LANE

HOV LANE

Map 2: Project Location Map

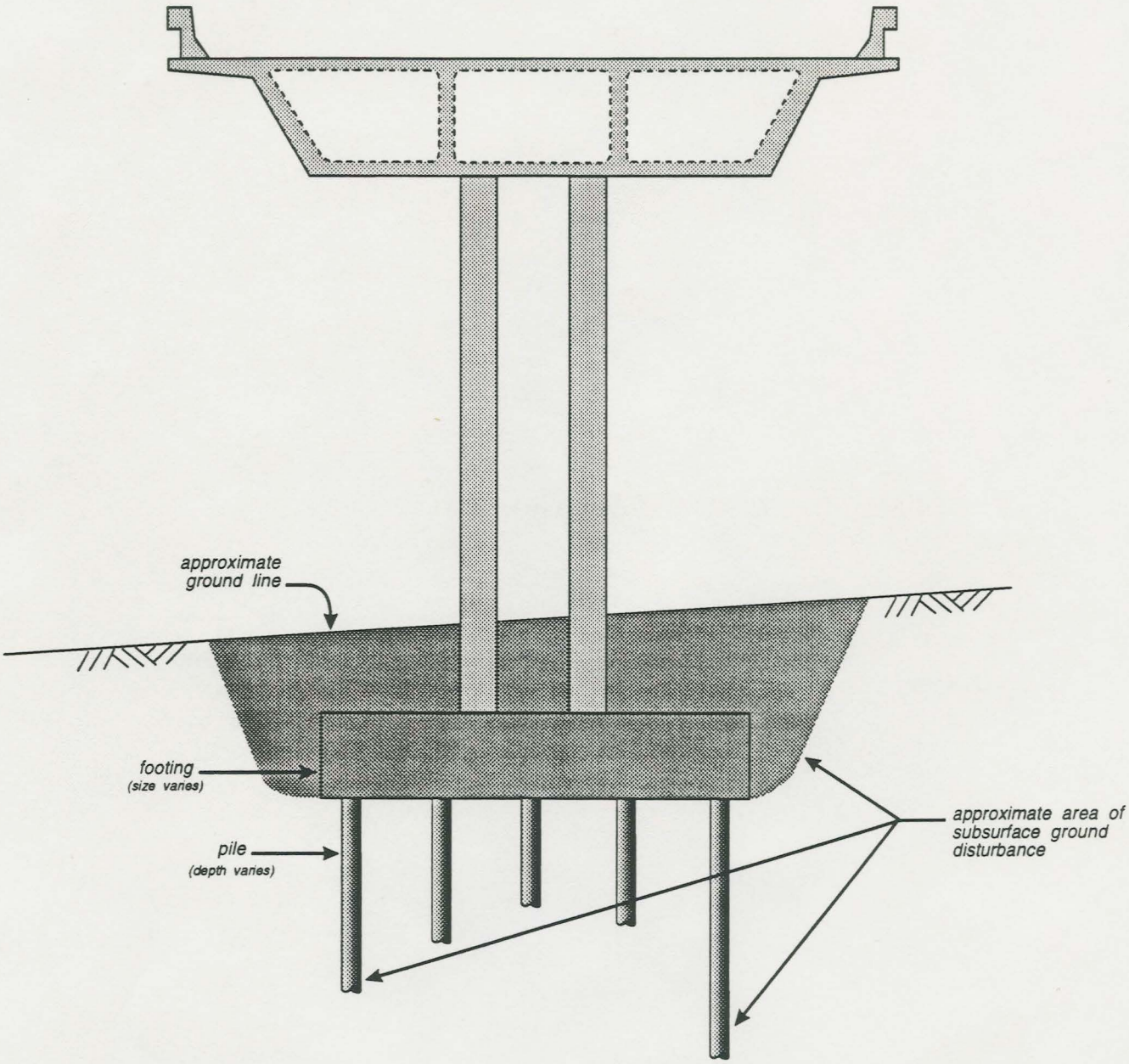


Figure 1: Cross section through typical spread/pile bent

No Scale

Figure on reverse of this page

Third Street side of Union Street at the freeway, a new cross street will be constructed connecting Union Street to Magnolia Street. Magnolia Street will be reconstructed as well.

Contract 'B' consists of the construction of a new freeway and interchange, as well as construction of new and reconstruction of old local city streets. The profile remains at grade, crossing under BART and over Seventh Street. Seventh Street will be realigned so that it may pass underneath I-880. The new profile grade is 11 feet below mean sea level. The sides of the undercrossing will be supported by retaining walls. There will be ramps at grade connecting the freeway to Seventh Street. North of Seventh Street, the profile will start to rise. The work on city streets incorporates Seventh Street, Tenth Street, Fourteenth Street, a Frontage Road, and a Service Access Road for the Southern Pacific Railroad yard.

The proposed replacement includes 148 freeway footings that will impact potentially surviving archaeological materials on 14 project blocks between Martin Luther King Way (Grove Street) southwest to just beyond Center Street. The footings support the columns and elevated structure. According to studies conducted by the California Department of Transportation (CALTRANS), footings for the proposed bents are unlikely to go much below the water table (about 10 feet). The size of the construction trenches will depend on the footing size and depth and the nature of the surrounding soil. A slope of 1:1 or shallower may be necessary in sandy soils. Footing sizes will vary according to specific engineering and soil conditions. Roughly, between Martin Luther King Way and Adeline Street, footings may be up to 19 feet by 19 feet across. Between Market and Adeline Streets, they may be up to 27 feet by 27 feet. The footings will tend to be between 4 and 6 feet thick. There will be a minimum of 2 to 3 feet of ground cover over the top of the footings and a maximum of about 8 to 10 feet. The footings will rest on piles (Figure 1). The number of piles will vary within a rough range of 16 to 25 piles per footing. Where stiff Merritt sands exist, piles will be about 35 to 40 feet in length. In bay mud, they may be up to 60 feet long. If a construction trench for a large, deep footing will involve too much ground disturbance, the contractor has the option of minimizing excavation size by using shoring. A worst case 1:1 excavation around a 19-square-foot by 6-feet thick footing with 10 feet of ground cover would require a surface trench of 51 by 51 feet. A 27-square-foot footing under similar conditions would require a surface trench of 59 by 59 feet angled to the footing size at the bottom. Footings for the proposed freeway are often located within several feet of each other. Thus, construction trenches may leave little or no undisturbed soil around these lines of footings.

A total of 172 existing columns/footings within the area of sensitivity will be cut off at ground level, except where new columns/footings will be located in the same place. In the latter case, the existing columns/footings will be excavated and removed. To the west of Center Street, a surface freeway will be constructed impacting 16 project blocks where historic archaeological deposits are believed to have survived. The proposed routes for the relocation of utilities generally run under existing surface streets.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

The project area lies on the western margin of an alluvial plain sloping westerly from the Berkeley hills. The plain is comprised of alluvial fan deposits derived from the hills and both coarse-grained (sand) and fine-grained (silt) bayside and shallow water deposits. The plain has been extended by the placement of fill on marshland and in some shallow water areas. Fan deposits and bayside and shallow water deposits overlie an older continental and marine deposit, which in turn overlies bedrock identified as Franciscan Complex. The depth to the Complex bedrock in the project area is estimated to be in excess of 400 feet. The project area is within a seismically active region. The proposed corridor consists almost entirely of existing freeway, urbanized residential and industrial areas, parking lots, and the Southern Pacific Rail yards. Much of the corridor is on filled land. Portions of the Southern Pacific Railroad yards are on native materials. Ground surface elevations range from about 20 feet mean sea level (MSL) near the I-580/I-980 Interchange to less than 10 feet MSL on much of the filled land. US coastal survey maps from 1857 do not contain contour lines for the area of Oakland within the APE. Consequently, a direct comparison of original and later surfaces is not possible. Groundwater in the project area ranges from 3 feet below ground surface (bgs) at the Southern Pacific West Oakland yard to 25 feet bgs just east of the I-980 corridor. Shallow groundwater zones of less than 20 feet bgs may have localized gradients in surficial fill materials. Groundwater in the loose sandy fill areas overlaying bay mud is at depths of 3 to 7 feet bgs. Sources of recharge to the fill include precipitation and leaking sewer and water lines. Underground utilities may also act as conduits for groundwater movement within the fill areas (CALTRANS 1991).

An archaeological survey report of several proposed alternative routes for the Cypress replacement identified only one recorded prehistoric site, CA-ALA-17, adjacent to the APE (Basin Research 1990:31). This site is located on Seventh Street between Adeline and Magnolia streets. In 1950 it consisted of an area containing "bones and artifacts"; Native American burials were reportedly removed from the site in 1876. There appears some question, however, as to whether the original site form is correct in locating the site on the north side of Seventh Street. The address given for the site at that time, 1163 Seventh Street, is presently on the south side. This address is currently the location of the US Postal Service Training Center (Basin Research 1990:Section 9.2). Although no archaeological sites were located by Basin during a surface reconnaissance of the APE, they noted (1990:31) that an archaeological sensitivity map of Alameda County (Quaternary Research Group 1976) identified the study area as possessing a high potential for archaeological resources. However, natural conditions such as marshes may have inhibited the development of aboriginal sites in some parts of the study area, while sea level changes may have adversely impacted or destroyed prehistoric sites that did develop (Basin Research 1990:31; Bickel 1978a, 1978b). Basin concluded that prehistoric sites with some degree of integrity were not to be expected within the archaeological APE (1990:31).

The Historic Architecture Survey Report (HASR) identified over 450 pre-1945 structures or complexes within the architectural APE for the project. The APE, established in the early stages of project development in consultation with FHWA and the California State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), covered a wide study area that was intended to be inclusive of all potential project alternatives. As a consequence, the list of historic properties inventoried in the HASR far exceeds the list of historic properties that will ultimately be affected by project construction (CALTRANS 1990). The HASR covers only three blocks within the area of high historic archaeological sensitivity where existing structures are to be removed. Only Blocks 24, 25, and 28 are included within the HASR; details are provided in the block by block analysis contained in Chapter IV.

MODIFIED APPROACH TO SECTION 106

Due to the extreme time constraints placed upon the construction schedule and to its emergency nature, a modified approach to Section 106 compliance is proposed. This approach was developed recently and formalized in a Memorandum of Agreement signed by the FHWA, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), and CALTRANS for a similar project in San Francisco, where another section of earthquake damaged freeway was slated for rebuilding.

The significance of archaeological properties is generally evaluated by assessing their potential eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under Criterion D. Preliminary research indicated that this would be the case with the majority of potential properties in the Cypress project area. The Section 106 process treats these sites through several distinct stages, including identification, evaluation, assessment of effect, and--where appropriate--treatment, which may include data recovery. At each stage, reports are prepared that provide more information about the properties, and the effect of the proposed action on them, and make recommendations for additional work necessary to complete the Section 106 process.

Under the standard procedures of the Council, the identification stage is documented in a technical report. Next, an evaluation plan is prepared, approved by the lead Federal agency, the SHPO, and the ACHP, and carried out; the evaluation is also documented in a technical report. If data recovery excavation is found to be necessary, a detailed research design and data recovery plan must be written and approved before final excavation is permitted. While this phased approach ensures that archaeological properties are treated appropriately in relation to their importance and the nature of the project impact, it can be very time consuming. This is particularly significant in cities, where paving and fill necessitate that the identification process involve the kind of subsurface examination that elsewhere is generally reserved for evaluation level excavations.

For the Cypress project, it is proposed that the identification, evaluation, and data recovery phases be collapsed into a single operation. This will be accomplished by applying the detailed research design presented herein during the identification phase. Employing specific criteria,

evaluations will be made during a combined identification/evaluation stage. In short, the NRHP-eligibility potential of archaeological features will be evaluated as they are uncovered. Where a feature does not meet the criteria presented in this document, it will be determined to be potentially NRHP-ineligible. Deposits that exhibit the specified characteristics will be treated as potentially eligible, and data recovery will be carried out according to Secretary of the Interior's *Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological Documentation*. See Chapter V for evaluation criteria and procedures for evaluation.

Report Goals

According to National Park Service (NPS) guidelines, archaeological sites in urban areas "are likely to be more or less invisible, buried under modern created land surfaces." For this reason, the discovery phase of urban archaeological research ['reconnaissance'] "consists of field checking predictions made on the basis of archival research" (NPS 1985:36).

Guidelines issued by the Council in its booklet *Identification of Historic Properties* provide more detail, stating that the identification phase consists of using "available information to develop a 'predictive model' indicating where historic properties are likely to exist." The guidelines go on to state that "a predictive model should not be regarded as reliable until it has been tested against objective information derived from field work." To test a model, it is necessary to inspect "both locations that are predicted to contain historic properties and locations that are predicted <u>not</u> to contain them" (ACHP 1988:21-22; emphasis in original).

The Council's regulations for *Identification and Consideration of Archaeological Properties in an Urban Context* (36 CFR 801) also recognize the problems in identifying urban archaeological phenomena. The regulations require archival research to define the likelihood that (1) potentially NRHP-eligible properties <u>may</u> have been created on the site and that (2) subsequent disturbance would have destroyed them. Where potentially eligible properties are likely to be present, the project proponent must "fund a professionally supervised and planned archaeological salvage program."

The preliminary sensitivity analysis was focused and fine-tuned for the present report. Archival research aimed at identifying potentially NRHP-eligible properties focused on those locations within impact areas having both high survival and research potential.

Since following a modified approach, evaluations are to be made in the field--allowing little time for the archaeologists to reflect on their decisions--it is essential that criteria are available that define the qualities that a property must possess for it to be NRHP-eligible. Thus an important goal of this document is to provide this essential guidance in the form of a detailed research design.

The goals of this document are to identify archaeological test locations where high research and survival potential coincide with project impacts; to provide the historic context, including research questions, evaluation criteria, and data requirements, within which to evaluate properties

discovered during testing; and to supply a Treatment Plan for data recovery for potentially eligible properties.

REPORT FORMAT

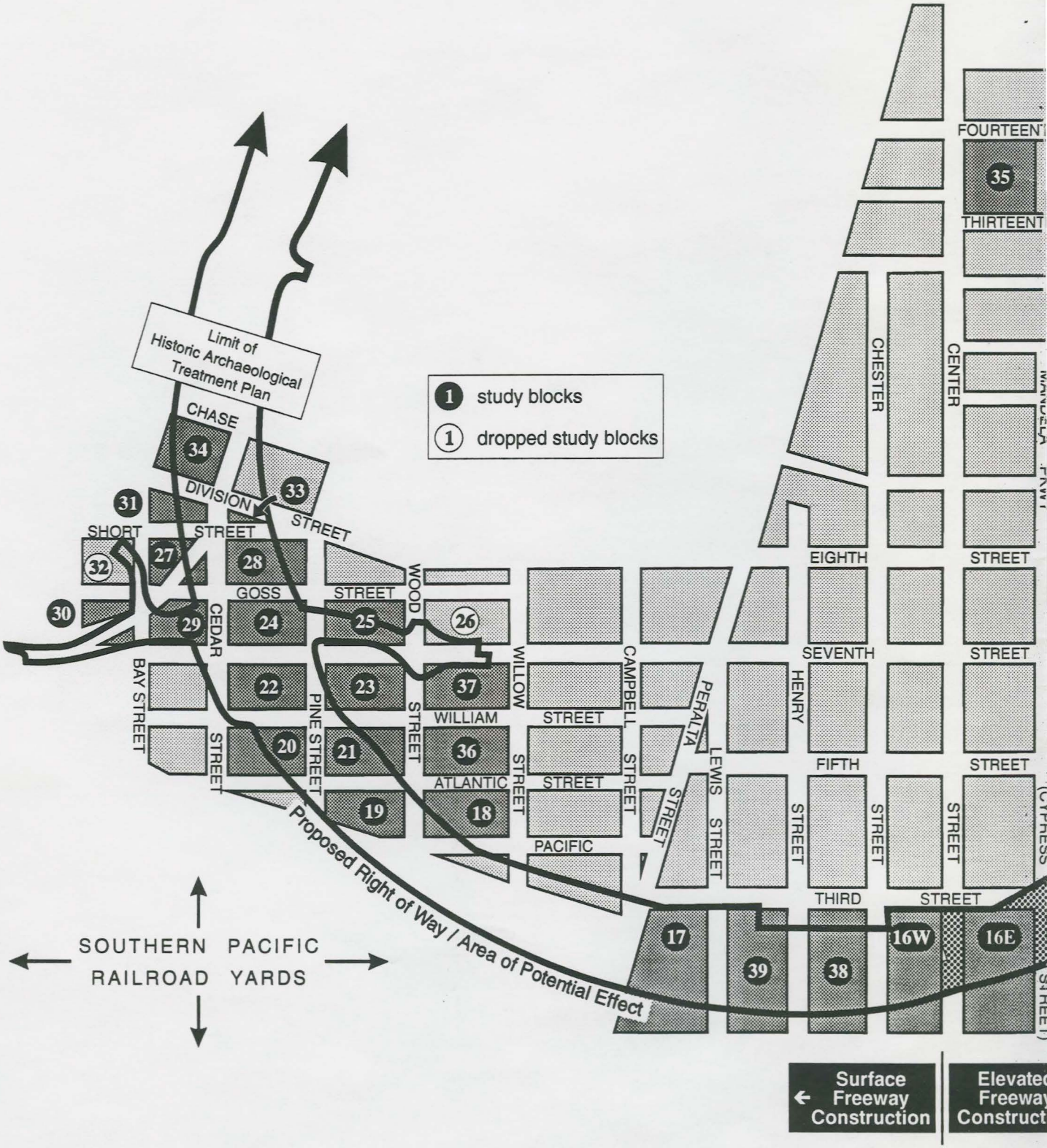
The areas of high historic archaeological sensitivity within the Cypress Freeway Replacement project area are included within 35 city blocks in West Oakland, numbered from east to west and portrayed on Map 3. Note some numbered blocks (12, 13, 26, 32) were eliminated from further consideration early in the study.

Chapter II provides an overview of West Oakland focusing on these project blocks. Chapter III identifies important research issues to which a site must contribute to be considered potentially eligible to the NRHP under Criterion D. On the basis of the preceding chapter, the research design constructs a series of general historical themes and poses a number of specific questions that the anticipated archaeological remains can address. The data requirements--both archaeological and historic/archival--of each research theme are also defined. The research design identifies types of properties that are expected to be encountered during the identification phase.

Chapter IV focuses on the history and archaeological research potential of individual project blocks. These histories are the product of block- and parcel-specific research using documents such as the U.S. Census, historic maps, city directories, tax and real estate records with the object of creating a tightly focused outline of the activities that were carried out within the project area. On the basis of historical research, archaeological test locations for specific property types identified in the research design are recommended.

Chapter V establishes a number of evaluative criteria for use during field work. These criteria define characteristics that must be present for a property to be considered potentially eligible to the NRHP. The criteria consider both the physical integrity and research potential of each property type. Methods for identification, primarily the use of heavy equipment to clear fill deposits from the surface, and the extent and nature of "testing" required before a deposit is considered potentially NRHP-eligible are defined, as well as the level of documentation necessary for properties considered ineligible. The degree of risk to excavators and the stipulations for soil handling and disposal have yet to be determined for some test locations that are in areas of potentially contaminated soil. Should additional health risks be identified, the need for archaeological excavation will be reassessed in relation to the potential significance of the proposed test locations.

Chapter V also presents a Treatment Plan for data recovery that specifies requirements for excavation and recording techniques. It includes a discussion of all components of data recovery plans mentioned in the Council's *Treatment of Archaeological Properties*.

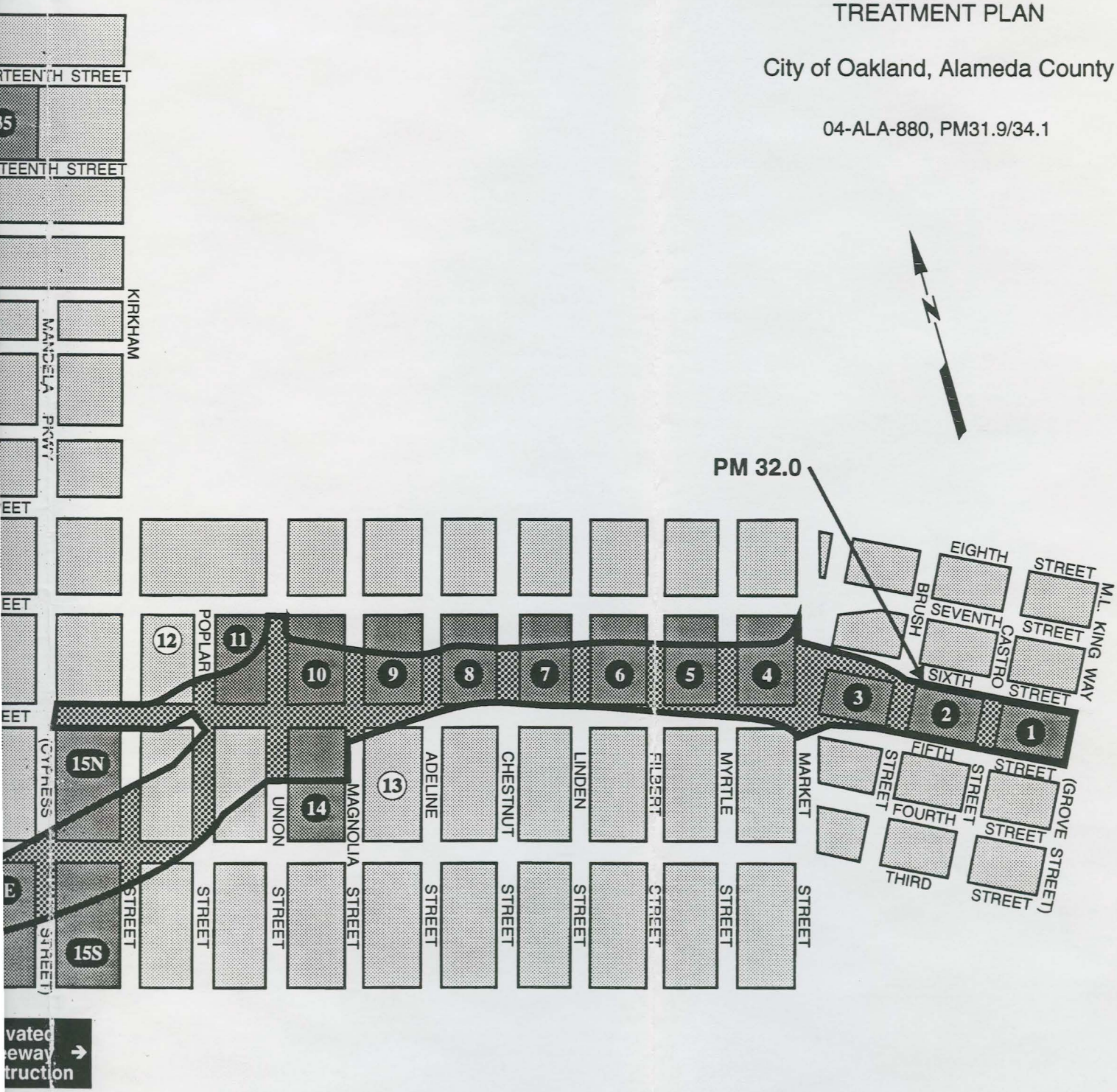

Limit of Historic Archaeological Treatment Plan
1 study blocks
1 dropped study blocks
CHASE
DIVISION
STREET
SHORT
STREET
GOSS
STREET
WOOD
CEDAR
BAY STREET
STREET
PINE STREET
STREET
WILLIAM
ATLANTIC
WILLOW
STREET
STREET
PACIFIC
CAMPBELL
STREET
PERALTA
STREET
LEWIS
STREET
HENRY
STREET
CHESTER
CENTER
EIGHTH
STREET
SEVENTH
STREET
FIFTH
STREET
THIRD
STREET
FOURTEENTH
THIRTEENTH
Proposed Right of Way / Area of Potential Effect
SOUTHERN PACIFIC RAILROAD YARDS
Surface Freeway Construction
Elevated Freeway Construct

Map 3:

CYPRESS REPLACEMENT PROJECT HISTORIC ARCHAEOLOGICAL TREATMENT PLAN

City of Oakland, Alameda County

04-ALA-880, PM31.9/34.1



CHAPTER II: HISTORY OF WEST OAKLAND by Nancy Olmsted, Roger W. Olmsted

INTRODUCTION, SCOPE & METHOD

The history of West Oakland is the story of the changing relationship between transportation technology and community against the background of the transforming interaction with the geographic site and the larger economic context. The changing relation between these elements formed the basis for the development of a community of Americans who were part of a larger historic westward movement. The type of neighborhood that emerged allowed West Oakland to become a foothold community for many different immigrant groups. The economics of their survival, both in terms of their income and how they spent their money, reflected the role of West Oakland as a transportation nexus: the gateway to the East Bay, the link to San Francisco, and a crucial node of a rail and water network that extended far beyond California.

The dominant role of transportation defined the historically emerging overall shape of the community as a built environment in its sense of place, its spatial context, and in the finely grained individual streetscapes that characterized West Oakland. This authentic expression of that sense of place was created by the members of a diverse community acting on their own--a genuine cultural expression, not an artificially planned environment.

The economics of transportation defined the growth of West Oakland from its beginnings. It was the working combination of water and rail transport that attracted a number of specialized industries. Planing mills, for example, received timber from forests on the northern coast out of steam schooners that docked at Long Wharf. There the lumber could in turn be loaded into railroad freight cars running directly out to the pier. The railroad cars travelled the short distance to the spur tracks at the big mills, such as the California Sash and Door Company, where Douglas fir and redwood were turned into useful manufactured products, that were then loaded back onto the railroad cars and shipped all over North America.

The people, too, of West Oakland often came to dwell there because of the growing needs of the technology of transportation. The construction of the railroads in the 1860s and 1870s and the expanding demand for labor that the railroads created throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries successively attracted members of different ethnic groups, who sometimes occupied niches within the technological organization--native-born Americans worked as engineers; immigrants from the British Isles in the shops; Portuguese and Italians on the track gangs; African Americans as sleeping car porters, to mention only a few. Yet West Oakland was not a rigidly hierarchical, ethnically segregated community: the railroad was the first major corporate employer in California, and for many years by far the largest. It offered opportunities to a variety of individuals who might otherwise have never come to West Oakland at all.

It should be kept in mind that this community emerged during the last 40 years of the 19th century and the first two decades of the 20th century, when California's burgeoning economy depended entirely upon the combination of rail and water transport. That West Oakland should have been the choice for the important location of the immense shops and yards of the Central Pacific Railroad at a time when the transcontinental railroad was the "work of the age" became reason enough for the community's existence. Chance, choice, and luck were part of that decision.

West Oakland was not a traditional company town, but it was a company-dominated community: on some of the project blocks 80-90% of the male heads of household worked for the railroad. Farther away from the railroad yards, on the blocks east of Market Street, or even east of Adeline, there was a much less heavy concentration of railroad jobs. The best estimate is that 60-65% of the adult males in the project area worked directly for the railroad in the late 19th and early 20th century period, but it is impossible to estimate how many other service and entrepreneurial jobs depended indirectly upon railroad payrolls.

Labor relations formed an especially significant element of the relation between the community and the railroad. Labor unions embodied the efforts of ordinary people to work together in building a better life. West Oakland was directly involved in several railway strikes that were major events of national historical significance.

In 1911 when electrification came to West Oakland and the Southern Pacific invested heavily in the big red electric cars and a growing fleet of ferryboats, it seemed as if the future economy of this thriving part of Oakland had no limits. The red cars themselves were a potent symbol of the refinement of technology and its ability to bring real benefits to the lives of ordinary people--many of whom were born in communities that had never heard of electricity. Oakland historian Vernon Sappers has placed the Golden Age of West Oakland from about 1911 through the decade of the 1920s, beginning with the inauguration of the electric trains and sustained by the economic stimulus of World War I, which was strongly felt in the Moore and Scott Shipyards and other war industries.

But the depression of the 1930s coincided with the building of the bridges, ensuring the dominance of automobiles and trucks over rail and water transport. At first the big electric trains operated across the Bay Bridge, but as more and more commuters drove to work the trains were abandoned. After World War II, the replacement of steam power by mass-produced diesel locomotives further eroded local employment, attenuating the presence of the railroad in the community. As transportation technology changed, West Oakland lost its historic place of economic importance.

World War II saw a tremendous influx of defense industries and war workers into West Oakland. But it was a flood of humanity that depended almost entirely on a government payroll, further eroding the local economic basis of the community. Progressive thinking about what a neighborhood should be led government officials to categorize West Oakland as a slum that

needed to be cleared, its residents rehoused in scientifically designed housing projects that would, according to the dominant social science theory of environmental determinism, somehow make them into better people. Much of the original West Oakland neighborhood was deliberately destroyed. Later, the resulting empty spaces were filled by housing projects and other government facilities unrelated to the historic urban fabric.

Ironically, the most visibly dominant post-war manifestation of the role of government planning in West Oakland, the elevated Cypress Freeway, helped to preserve a portion of the neighborhood that lay to its west. After it was built in the 1950s, the double-decked concrete freeway became the western boundary of the more drastic slum clearance redevelopment projects that were especially in vogue among the social planners of the 1950s and 1960s.

For transportation engineers in the 1950s, the Cypress Freeway was a necessary highway connection, linking the Nimitz Freeway to the Bay Bridge and allowing motorists to bypass West Oakland streets completely. The chosen route and design of the freeway was believed to be efficient and economical. Environmental Planning, now an important part of CALTRANS, did not then exist.

Today, West Oakland is undergoing a renaissance. Old houses are being restored by residents who, like the original builders, take pride in what is their own. New housing is being built on an historically sensitive scale. Just as the emergence of West Oakland was a product of transportation technology, so now its future depends in large part on how the neighborhood reestablishes its links to the greater community.

SCOPE AND METHOD

Initially, the project had 32 tax assessor blocks--following the proposed replacement of the Cypress Freeway (I-880) in West Oakland. Subsequently, three blocks were dropped, and additional blocks were added. It was decided to retain the original project block numbering system, already in use in organizing research materials. For that reason, there are no Blocks 12, 13, and 26 in the specific block analysis. Project Blocks 15 and 16 each include two tax assessor blocks; this arrangement was chosen because of their spatial arrangement and their closely related land uses.

West Oakland is a useful geographic term that refers to the area west of Market Street. The *West of Market Boys' Journal*, published from 1936 through 1962, featured "Do You Remember" columns that described life in this district in the 1880s up through 1920s. The "Knave" section of the *Oakland Tribune* carried reminiscences of life in West Oakland. Oakland Point is the first historic designation for the western promontory of West Oakland, where an 1850s wharf extended west into San Francisco Bay. "The Point" generally described the area west of Peralta and included all the land south of Seventh Street, and much of it north to San Francisco Bay. The 1878 Historic Atlas Map shows this rounded promontory quite clearly.

Although The Point is mostly used as an historic reference, West Oakland is a definite place today, and clearly located by Oaklanders. Of the 32 project blocks near the freeway route, all but 3 lie west of Market Street. The difference in the socio-economic character of these 3 eastern blocks as contrasted to the rest of the project area underscores the sense of place that characterizes West Oakland.

The time frame for this archival study begins with the earliest descriptions of the natural site given in diaries and legal cases dating from the Spanish land-grant period and follows through a series of historic maps and views from 1851 up to 1951. The 1857 U.S. Coast Survey Map shows the original 1851 Kellersberger town plat of Oakland.

The most valuable early visual archival source proved to be the 1870 Snow & Roos bird's-eye view. Many detailed features of the built environment before 1870 are carefully delineated on this remarkable drawing. This view was reproduced at a scale that can be magnified for study purposes, although folds in the one known specimen of the original lithograph impedes enlarged photographic reproduction (see Plate 8).

The Snow & Roos view allows researchers to compare pre-1871 structures with those shown on the 1889 and 1902 Sanborn fire insurance maps and determine which of these buildings predate 1870. Because the pace of change in West Oakland was slow after sites were initially built upon, and since there was nothing like the catastrophic 1906 earthquake and fire in San Francisco, a number of the structures dating back to the 1860s and 1870s survived for many decades, appearing on Sanborn maps as late as 1951.

In this West Oakland study, Sanborn maps for Oakland date from the 1889 set, referred to above; a second set, dated 1902; and a third set, dated 1912 with corrections made to 1951. In the case of some blocks, no 1889 Sanborn maps were available, because the blocks had very few insurable structures in 1889 and no maps were made. For these blocks, the first Sanborn maps date to 1902.

Archival Sources and Methods

A one-time survey made by the Oakland Assessor's Office in 1884 shows not only land owners and improvements, but also lists tenants, their valuable personal property, and their occupations at specific addresses on each block. This valuable archival resource, made available by the Oakland City Planning Department, became a means of locating residents, with their occupations described, on each of the 32 project blocks. Nearly 300 heads of household were recorded. Each individual was then checked through 19th-century Oakland city directories, back to the first city directory published in 1869 and forward to 1900. This gave the survey team an 1884 population that could be matched to the 1889 Sanborn maps in many cases.

Occupations listed in the city directories were far more specific than the Tax Assessor's penciled notes, which frequently stated only "CPRR" (Central Pacific Railroad); the occupations

given to the many railroad employees in the city directories were differentiated as towerman, signalman, car cleaner, oiler, engineer, conductor, machinist, shipwright, pile driver, porter, waiter, cook, or carpenter. The range of trades employed by the railroad--later the Southern Pacific--went far beyond conventional, late 20th-century notions of what a 19th-century railroad company required.

While the survey team of Katherine Johnson and Will Spires completed tracing this population through the 19th century, the Federal census data sheets for each block in 1880 were collected and analyzed by researcher Anmarie Medin for block-specific location, ethnicity, and occupation. The listed individuals were then cross-referenced with the 300 heads of household from 1884. The advantage of the census is that it named all members of each household, complete with relationship to the head of the household, age, place of birth, and race. It was possible to place individual families in the homes with street addresses shown on the Sanborn maps. With the city directory information keyed in, it became possible to reconstruct brief family histories about the earliest and most enduring residents.

The 1900 and 1910 census survey sheets were color coded for families located at street addresses on each block, and shown visually on Sanborn maps. Summary sheets showing ethnicity and occupation were produced for each block. All of this working data--raw and summarized--will be used by archaeologists in the field.

With census information and listings from the Great Register of Voters in 1894 and 1896, hotels and boarding houses took on the character of their residents. This population of employed male lodgers supported many of the small street-level service businesses, such as restaurants, barbershops, saloons, cigar shops, grocery stores, bakeries and confectioneries, drugstores, and laundries. It became evident that the extent of this network of 15 good-sized hotels and lodging houses required discrete and integral study. This research was carried out by Aicha Woods, and is included as a distinct subsection of this report, rather than dispersed among the block-by-block analyses. The study of West Oakland hotels and lodging houses also made use of a Works Progress Administration (WPA) land use survey dating from 1935. Although not geographically complete, sites that were described in the WPA survey included descriptions of the physical condition of the properties and the numbers and types of tenants found. This information helped to inform our understanding of the depression years in West Oakland.

To summarize, written archival sources used in this study of West Oakland included: (1) the one-time survey of the 1884 Tax Assessors' Recording of Owners and Tenants on Block Books, including improvements and occupations; (2) 19th-century city directory entries, listing occupations and street addresses for the 300 heads of household from the 1884 survey; (3) Census data sheets on each of 32 project blocks for 1880, 1900, and 1910; (4) Great Register of Voters in Oakland for 1894 and 1896 for hotel and lodging house residents; (5) the WPA Land Use Survey made in 1935.

Two detailed historical surveys were made of Oakland that included much important information on West Oakland. The first is a comprehensive WPA survey, completed in 1939 by

Edgar A. Hinckel and William G. McCann. This detailed two-volume typescript attempted to bring together everything that was known about Oakland's social, economic, and political history. For example, one volume contains a history of every religious group in Oakland in the 1930s. Each church was asked to submit a complete history, and many of them did just that. Because the churches were so often founded to take care of the religious needs of specific immigrant groups, these chronologies provide a clearer picture of where and when specific micro-communities settled in West Oakland.

The second source was published in 1990 by the Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey in four volumes with several addenda. This survey aimed at determining National Register eligibility for above-ground structures. Although most of the sites covered are north of the project area, the historical background on West Oakland is specific and carefully cited.

Voices Describe West Oakland

With the progress of research, it became clear that the railroad, with its accompanying satellite industries and transportation routes, was the central operative element in shaping the 19th-century and early 20th-century history of West Oakland--just as bridges, highways, freeways, and BART tracks and right-of-ways have determined much of the community's history in the second half of the 20th century. It was fortunate that Vernon J. Sappers, the most authoritative railroad historian on West Oakland, gave an important and authentic voice to this study.

Vernon Sappers: "From the collection of Vernon J. Sappers" appears on many of the very best photographs of West Oakland to be found in the Bancroft Library, as well as in various published books on railroads and ferryboats. Bill Sturm, Curator of the Oakland History Room, advised that "Vernon Sappers probably has the best single private collection of Oakland photographs--everything from ferry boats to trains to neighborhoods." Finding Vernon Sappers, living in his parents' 1906 home on a sunny hill overlooking West Oakland, with hundreds of binders filled with historic photographs, all identified and filed by subject matter in various rooms in his home, accounted for 90% of the views seen in this report. Important as these photographs are, Vernon Sappers' recollections of life in West Oakland have been as valuable.

Sappers' careful accounts--transcribed in his own words during three long interviews in March and April of 1993, plus several other shorter conversations during that same period--have given this West Oakland survey an authentic voice. Sappers' recollections include many stories passed on by his father, who started working as a draftsman for the railroad in 1898, as well as reminiscences of his own boyhood, when many Saturdays and Sundays were spent travelling on West Oakland trains with his father, making good use of his railroad employee free pass. His recollections cover the period from the 1890s through the 1950s, with a concentration on the West Oakland "Golden Age," from 1911 through the 1920s, and the Depression in the 1930s.

Plate 1: Josef Sappers and Catherine Peters, on their Wedding Day, January 1906 . . . Josef's father was a Russian whaling master who came to California in 1871 and married a woman from Portugal. Catherine's mother had immigrated from the Portuguese Isle of Fleurs. In 1898 Josef Sappers went to work for the Southern Pacific as a draftsman in West Oakland. His son, Vernon Sappers, recalls: "My father and I would take off on a Saturday or Sunday morning to spend the day riding trains on our free railroad pass. He would visit with all the people he enjoyed talking to in West Oakland. We would go down to the railyards to look at the equipment. Of course I was taking pictures all the time. It was always interesting to go out on the pier. Sometimes we would take the ferry over to San Francisco. My father loved to eat out--he liked to try different kinds of pie with coffee. He seemed to have a good time everywhere he went. When we would get back late, my mother couldn't understand how we could have spent so much time in West Oakland. From our front porch we could see the cloud of smoke and soot hovering over West Oakland. My father called it "the West Oakland Dinge."

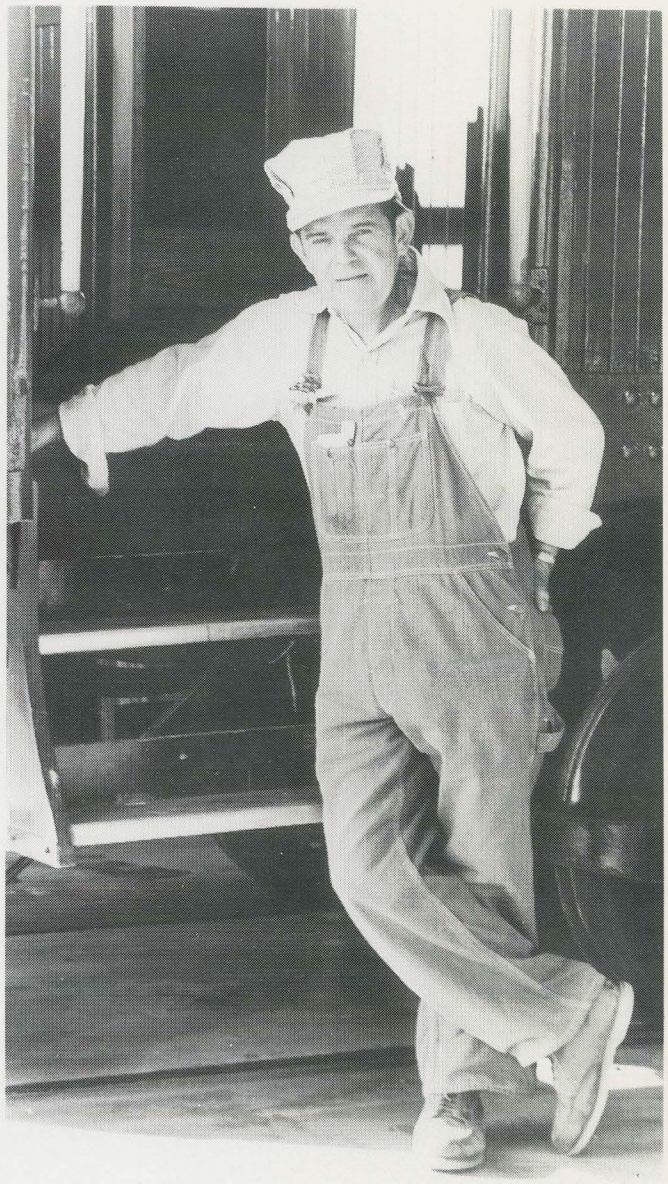


Plate 2: Vernon J. Sappers at the Western Railroad Museum at Rio Vista Junction in 1988 . . . "I spent nearly every weekend for about six years removing coats of paint from the original cherry wood on that car where I am standing." One of the founders of the museum, Vernon Sappers is a railroad historian who understands the value of identified historic photographs. His immense cataloged collection of historic photographs is his life's work.

(Both views from the collection of Vernon J. Sappers)

In many ways Vernon Sappers is the living proof of the third-generation immigrant dream realized--that each succeeding generation would have a better life, free from punishing physical toil, and secure from poverty. Careful upbringing that encouraged an inquiring mind, plus his public school education, has led to a life of solid accomplishment.

Vernon Sappers' grandfather was born in May 1840 in St. Petersburg, Russia. The Russian family name--before it was Americanized as Sappers--was Gerko. At the age of 17, he joined the Tsar's navy, which was based in the port of Kronstadt. But life was very hard for such a young man at sea, and he jumped ship in New Zealand. It was there that he learned the whaling trade that would become his life's occupation. Landing in San Francisco in 1871, he chose that port as his home for the rest of life. He served as master on whaling voyages out of San Francisco at a time when that city had become the world center of the whaling industry. He married Mary Peters, a lovely Portuguese woman who gave birth to Vernon's father, Josef.

Although their impressive, and rather stern, formal portraits look down from the wall in Vernon Sappers' dining room, his own memory of his grandfather is that of a fun-loving, indulgent companion who entertained his grandson with great adventure stories. Sappers remembered, "My grandfather lived to be 101 years old; he died just a few days before Pearl Harbor. My grandmother always said she was glad that he went before he had to be registered as an alien. He would have hated that--but he had never given up his Russian citizenship, in spite of his long life in San Francisco." Vernon's father chose a second-generation Portuguese woman for his wife, Catherine Peters (the name is coincidental), whose family had migrated to Half Moon Bay from the Isle of Fleurs. Vernon Sappers learned to speak Portuguese from visiting with his boyhood Portuguese friends in West Oakland.

Sappers' most interesting recollections are of the many weekend trips made with his father to visit friends and acquaintances in West Oakland. His father was a convivial person, who loved eating out, and seeing the sights along Seventh Street, as well as out on the pier, and inspecting the railroad yards to indulge his son's fascination with railroad equipment. Whatever Vernon Sappers saw, he photographed. Furthermore, he collected photographs from everyone who would part with a print to add to his growing collection.

As one of the founders of the Western Railway Historical Museum at Rio Vista Junction, Vernon Sappers has given much back to the country that gave his grandparents and parents the traditional immigrant haven and starting place for their families. As he was being interviewed, Vernon Sappers' latest book on railroads was about to appear: *Rails to San Francisco Bay*, which he put together with his late friend and railroad historian, Harre DeMorro.

Insofar as possible, the researchers attempted to record Vernon Sappers' words just as he said them--to keep the precision of his language and the pace of his speech. But to be certain that no errors crept in, he agreed to go over the draft of this report with a critical eye. Once again, we are indebted to his honest appreciation of the hard task of getting the story of West Oakland down--and getting it right.

Jack London: The advent of literary social realism coincided with the life of Jack London. London found much of his material in the circumstances of his own life, with an especially accurate eye for the problems of everyday life. These accurately recollected and vividly described details of social life in late-19th and early-20th century life in West Oakland form a unique resource for the social historian.

Born in 1876, Jack London spent most of his childhood and young adult life in and around West Oakland. The site of one of his many rented homes has been located at 807 Pine Street on Block 20. Still another boyhood home was on Seventh Street, near Adeline, and may have been on Block 9. These typical West Oakland small rental houses are seen on Plates 3 and 4. For a time, his father ran a fruit and vegetable store on Seventh Street, near Peralta, and the family lived in the four rooms behind the store (O'Connor 1964:31). Not only did London live in and around the project area, he delivered the *Enquirer* at early morning hours to the front porches of West Oaklanders, just as in later years he delivered ice to Oakland saloons. Like many young boys growing up West of Market Street in the 1880s and 90s, he hung around on corners with gangs. Fighting was a central form of self-expression, and boxing became their own sport, with local boxing heroes whose exploits made columns in the sports section.

From recollections of this period published in the *West of Market Boys' Journal*, can be learned the names of West Oakland gangs--the Boo Gang, Fish Gang, Sewer Gang, and Sporting Life. But in London's largely autobiographical novel, *Martin Eden*, he detailed descriptions of how gangs got together, how fights were staged to avoid police interference, and he included the argot and street rules for gang fighting. George W. Simpson, remembered Jack London at Hansen's Hall (Block 25):

> We had boxing matches at the old Hansen's Hall. . . . Among the most frequent spectators was Jack London who had used many incidents occurring at the club. He put the Attell-Pondas fight in a book he called *The Game.* And I guess he knew all the club members. No one knew who was going to get roasted or boosted by Jack, but you could figure on one or the other [*West of Market Boys' Journal,* September 1938].

On Christmas day 1898, London wrote a letter: "Dear Mable, It is about the loneliest Christmas I ever faced. . . . The typewriter goes back the 31st of December. . . . I have studied, read, and thought a great deal, and believe I am at last beginning to grasp the situation--the general situation, my situation, and the correlative situation between the two. . ." (Kingman 1979:87-88). But he made no money from his writing in 1898. By his own records, in the year 1899 Jack London mailed 287 manuscripts to editors--mostly short stories, but also jokes, essays, and poems--he tried his rented typewriter at everything. He got 266 rejection slips; for that prolific year he earned an average of $29.73 a month. "He once said that he should at least be able to make ten cents an hour from his writing. He didn't quite make it that year" (Kingman 1979:87-91 passim).

Plate 3: Jack London's Boyhood Home at 807 Pine Street . . . Located on Block 20, the four-room cottage may be seen on the 1889 Sanborn Map. London was 11 when he lived here in 1887 with his mother and stepfather, as well as his stepsister and her son. With only two small bedrooms, the raised basement may have given them badly needed living space. In London's *Valley of the Moon*, his newly wed couple rented their Pine Street cottage for $10 a month.

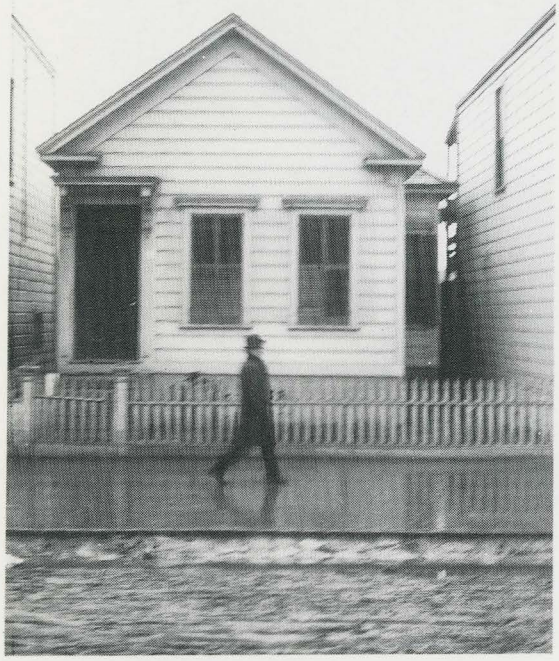


Plate 4: Jack London's Home on Adeline, near Seventh Street . . . No street address is given for this small West Oakland house. His biographers write that London's stepfather ran a fruit market on Seventh Street, near Adeline, and that the family lived in four small rooms in the back.

Plate 5: Jack London, age 17 . . . When he was 15 he captained his own oyster pirate sloop. At 16 he joined the California Fish Patrol. Just 12 days past age 17, London signed on the three-masted sealing schooner, *Sophia Sutherland,* bound for Japan and high adventure. *(All views, courtesy of the California State Park Archives)*

London fought the day-to-day battle against poverty even at the age of 12 "when his step-sister Ida worked as a laundress in the Contra Costa Laundry; Jack delivered papers, worked as boy helper on an ice wagon, set up pins in an bowling alley, and swept out saloons at Sunday picnic grounds" (Kingman 1979:32-33). When he was 15 years old and had graduated from Cole Grammar School, Jack worked in a converted stable at Hickmott's Cannery:

> Month in and month out, the shortest day I ever worked was ten hours. When to ten hours of actual work at a machine is added the noon hour; the walking to work and walking home from work; the getting up in the morning, dressing, and eating; the eating at night, undressing and going to bed, there remains no more than nine hours out of the twenty-four. . . . I managed to steal a little time for reading. But many a night I did not knock off until midnight. On occasion I worked eighteen and twenty hours on a stretch. . . . There were weeks on end when I never knocked off work earlier than eleven o'clock and got home and in bed at half after midnight, and was called at half-past five to dress, eat, walk to work, and be at my machine at seven o'clock whistle blow [London in O'Connor 1964:61].

His varied jobs included work in a laundry, a jute mill, the cannery, and as an "oyster pirate" on San Francisco Bay. Later he was hired by the Fish Patrol, the scourge of illegal fisherman on the bay. All of these experiences became the fabric of his stories and books.

It is not known to what extent London, or his publishers, bowdlerized the details of his adventures. Certainly, he did not write about some aspects of working-class life. He could not ignore the sensibilities of his early 20th-century readers: they might enjoy being mildly shocked, but within the boundaries of moral conventions. As Arthur Calder-Marshall remarked in his introduction to *John Barleycorn*: "Jack London knew very much more than he revealed in *John Barleycorn*. According to his biographer, Irving Stone, London is said to have remarked, 'The only trouble about *John Barleycorn* is that I did not put in the whole truth. I did not dare put in the whole truth.' Stone gives no source for this remark. . ." (Calder-Marshall 1964:10). Such caveats should not, however, obscure the fact that London was, quite consciously, a realist writer who sought to describe actual social conditions within the limits imposed by public morals.

John Barleycorn first appeared serialized in 1913 in the *Saturday Evening Post*, just six years before London's death. His detailed story of his victories and defeats in his struggle with alcohol struck a nerve in the social conscience of America. This work was widely quoted and used by prohibitionists, partly because of London's stature as an American hero, and partly because of his insistence throughout the book that the easy availability of alcohol everywhere, day or night, was the central reason for his own drinking.

But whether or not London omitted some aspects of his West Oakland youth, he included so much precise detail as to hours, prices, places, and individual job and character descriptions, that this West Oakland study is greatly enhanced by his work. The nostalgic stories of West Oakland life found in the *West of Market Boys' Journal* articles (written and published in the late 1930s up through the 1940s with personal memories from 1880 to 1920) become three-dimensional through London's writings.

97-120

C. L. Dellums: Among the earliest African-American settlers in West Oakland were the Pullman porters. Certainly in their travel circuits across America, they influenced many families to come West and try life in California--in a place called Oakland where jobs were plentiful, housing was cheap, and race and class barriers were at a minimum. Finding a voice for this important group occurred when the office for the International Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters was discovered at 1714 Seventh Street on Block 26. While Block 26 is not within the area of potential effects, the importance of this movement and the effect it would have had on the people living in the project area warranted further research.

The Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey added a *Second Addendum Historic Property Survey Report* in April 1991 that included some information on C. L. Dellums. "The first all-Black labor union chartered by A. F. of L., the Brotherhood was organized in the east by A. Philip Randolph and in Oakland by C. L. Dellums." The addendum noted that the Dellums' pool hall at 1716-1718 Seventh Street (formerly 1714 Seventh Street) had an office upstairs that served as the "sometimes West Coast and national headquarters" of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters from 1934 to about 1978. An excellent oral history had been taken down from Dellums and is on file at the Bancroft Library (Henderson:1973). Researcher Will Spires undertook the necessary additional research to give Cottrell Lawrence Dellums a voice in this study--and with him, the African-American settlers of West Oakland. Dellums' daughter, Marva Dellums, had donated her father's papers to the Northern California Center for Afro-American History and Life. It is from their archives of some 16 boxes of papers, as well as Joyce Henderson's oral history project at the Bancroft Library, that this part of the overview was written by Will Spires.

The Oakland Enquirer: Another authentic voice that proved useful in describing life in West Oakland was that of the *Oakland Enquirer*. The economic importance of the railroad in the life of West Oaklanders meant that railroad strikes had dramatic and immediate effects on the lives of people who lived and worked in the project area. The 1894 American Railway Union strike--the first national railroad strike with local effect--was covered intensively by the press. Because it lasted for a little longer than the month of July, the press never let up in their coverage--as they would in the much longer 1911-1912 railroad machinists strike.

The local drama of the strike was emphasized by the *Oakland Enquirer* in its daily stories and extra editions. Reporters covered every West Oakland meeting and incident and wrote lively detailed accounts. National news was bloody and violent in Chicago, Houston, and Sacramento, but it was the *Enquirer's* reporters who wrote about the people they knew who were acting out dramatic scenes in their own backyard. Although San Francisco newspapers were less involved with events in Oakland, they did send quick-sketch artists over to West Oakland and then ran their pen and ink drawings in the *Chronicle, Call,* and *Examiner;* Oakland newspapers could not afford that graphic luxury. For that reason, we have included San Francisco drawings, for the most part sketched by the *San Francisco Examiner's* talented artist, but generally accompanied by *Oakland Enquirer* stories.

Plate 6: Cottrell Lawrence Dellums . . . The labor leader who made the difference to more African Americans in West Oakland than any other single individual, C.L. Dellums had to work hard to land a job as a Pullman Porter. "When I went to work for the Pullman Company in 1924, they paid $60 a month, by the calendar month. If you worked all the calendar months you *might* get $60, but the odds were ten to one that you'd never get $60 while you were a young porter" [Dellums 1973:14]. He went from active membership in the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters Union in 1926, to National Vice President of the union in 1929. West Coast union headquarters were located at 1716-18 Seventh Street, on Block 26.

Dellums made a strong push for civil rights at the beginning of World War II, when he and Philip Randolph persuaded Franklin Roosevelt to sign Executive Order 8802, making it possible for thousands of African Americans to join the immense war-time work force at the West Oakland shipyards. Dellums recalled: "I was an advocate for the rights of labor, period! I would fight for an all-white union in trouble, just as soon as I would fight for an all-black union" [Henderson 1973:139].

(Courtesy of the Northern California Center for Afro-American History and Life)

West of Market Boys' Journal: At about the same time that San Francisco had the *South of Market Journal*, published by the South of Market Boys, West Oakland produced a similar publication. Both were published monthly, starting in the mid-1930s, by men's social clubs; the "West of Market Girls" had their own organization. Circulation numbers are unknown but the members hustled each other for trade with advertisements for many varieties of businesses, each of which bore the line of type at the bottom: "Member of the West of Market Boys."

The main chroniclers, such as Dr. Ed Anthony, who had bylines and occasional portraits printed with his West Oakland recollections, had grown up in that community. They got together for "Old Timers' Nights," "The Grand Stag Annual Round Up," "Dance Carnival at the Hotel Oakland," and all of their monthly meetings involved entertainment and refreshments. The West of Market Girls' Club (organized March 30, 1938) had their own meetings, and sometimes gave dinner dances which they invited the West of Market Boys to attend for "$1.50 (no extras)."

Like the San Francisco journal, both publications carried organizational information promoting the idea of continuing convivial friendship among old timers who could compare recollections of growing up in working-class urban communities in San Francisco and in Oakland. For men in their 70s and 80s, who had been West of Market boys in the 1880s and 1890s, remembering "the old gang" was important--putting their recollections into print was the most appropriate way to keep the past from slipping away without notice.

A favorite literary device for the San Francisco and West Oakland chroniclers was to go up one street and down another, on imaginary buggy rides, locating "Scrap Iron George Clark" at his house and "widow Mary Dolan, next door." Unfortunately, the writers often did not give specific locations or cross-streets--they were interested in recalling personalities and places to stir the memories of their contemporaries, not for the benefit of future historians. By checking names and approximate street addresses with the annual Oakland city directories, it is possible to estimate the years covered--in most cases, a very broad timespan. Names were occasionally spelled like they were remembered: Frese, became Freese, Buhsen became Bushen.

Bound copies of the *West of Market Boys' Journal* are on file in the Oakland History Room at the public library, just as the *South of Market Journal,* has been saved in the San Francisco History Room in the San Francisco main library. Although the *West of Market Boys' Journal* survived until 1962, the earlier volumes published in the 1930s and 1940s were of greatest historical interest, when a number of the West Oakland old timers were regular contributors.

A corollary to the *West of Market Boys' Journal*, was the "Knave" section of the *Oakland Tribune.* Starting as a column at the turn of the century, the Knave developed into a full-page Sunday feature of signed short articles concerned with California history. Usually these pieces bore no connection to each other; they were the best of the historic accounts that the editor had on hand. The strongest editorial period for the Knave was from 1952 through 1974. From time to time, descriptions of life in West Oakland or Oakland Point appeared. These articles have been indexed by the Oakland History room in terms of their subject matter and publication date.

A few bear more than a passing resemblance to *West of Market Boys' Journal* articles, but the Knave authors do not appear with signed articles in the West Oakland journal, however, some of them may have contributed some "Do You Remember" columns which carry no by-lines in the *West of Market Boys' Journal.*

THE NATURAL SITE

In late March of 1772, Fray Juan Crespi recorded in his diary that the dozen soldiers under Lt. Pedro Fages had crossed Alameda Creek and camped near San Lorenzo Creek. Having passed over five arroyos, the explorers had come to rest "not very far from an arm of the estuary which forms with another, something like a peninsula, where there is a grove of live oaks, which one can only enter from the mainland side" (Bolton 1931:36).

Two geographic factors dominated the early development of West Oakland: first, the site was effectively a peninsula. The broad tidal estuary first described by Crespi, and later named San Antonio Creek, defined the serpentine southern shore and cut the land off on the eastern side with a large slough that later became Lake Merritt. On the west, the shoreline of San Francisco Bay formed a broad shallow mudflat. To the north, a smaller tidal marsh spread eastward as far as the present line of Adeline Street.

The second important geographic feature was the sandbar that for centuries had silted up the entrance to the estuary. Shown on the Coast Survey Map of 1857, the water over the sandbar was only 1 to 5 feet deep. The estuary itself provided a natural channel from 10 to 12 feet deep for incoming vessels, with the first accessible landing place with solid footing appearing at what became the foot of Broadway. Thus, Horace Carpentier built his first pier at this meeting of land and water in 1852, and the 110-foot-wide avenue of Broadway--leading diagonally from the waterfront--became the nucleus of Oakland's first developed neighborhood.

In an age and a place that depended entirely on shipping for all communication, as well as for transport of all passengers and goods, the timing of landing a vessel at Oakland could be a significant problem. Carpentier describes landing in Oakland in 1852:

> The estuary at high tide in May, 1852, was navigable by boats of five or six feet draft or more. At low tide it was navigable at the bar by boats drawing perhaps two feet or less of water. Above the bar and up to the embarcadero of San Antonio (which is now East Oakland), it was navigable for vessels of larger draft.
>
> I have often been on steamboats and sailing boats that were aground and detained at the bar. They were detained there sometimes a short time, sometimes many hours, and sometimes all night. I have sometimes had to get out of the boat and wade across the bar. One night when I had urgent business to attend to, I left the boat there at a late hour of the night, eleven or twelve, and waded ashore to high ground on the Oakland side without getting my feet wet above my boot tops, and then went through the woods to my home.
>
> The bar extended across the entire bed of the creek. It was continuous shoal water--a bar ran around from Oakland Point to the Alameda Point. . . . when uncovered at low tide, the bar extended all around from Oakland to the Alameda shore [City of Oakland v. Oakland Waterfront Company 1895: Carpentier deposition, 649].

The sandbar across the broad estuary was a natural condition that hindered commercial development of the Port of Oakland. From the early 1850s until 1874, shipping continued to struggle over this obstacle. In 1874 the Army Corps of Engineers undertook dredging the sandbar and estuary on a continuing basis. But as 20th-century ocean-going vessels increased in size, the expense of maintaining a clear lane for Oakland shipping continued to be a complex and expensive problem for the port.

In the flatlands that lay between the shore and the hills, the inundating shoreline of marsh forced settlement back from the water's edge onto slightly higher, firm, dry land. As the 1857 Coast Survey Map shows, development clustered around the Carpentier Pier at the foot of Broadway and was spread very lightly across the grid street pattern first established by Julius Kellersberger in 1853. The Kellersberger survey demarcated "that portion of Oakland lying south of the south line of 14th Street, and east of the line running parallel with and 300 feet westerly from West Street. He divided the same in blocks of 200 by 300 feet, with streets 80 feet wide, excepting only . . . Broadway, whose width is 110 feet" (Baker 1914:90).

Beyond the limits of the Kellersberger survey--the area west of the line of Market Street--most of West Oakland is shown as woodland on the 1857 Coast Survey; written accounts from the early 1850s also mention the possibilities of pasturage: "In August of 1850, Robert, William and Edward Patten crossed the bay to visit the redwood of San Antonio. They made a landing in a whaleboat, near Seventh Street. They described 'a vast undulating field of luxuriant grass, some ten inches in height'"(Baker 1914:355).

> In February of 1852, Oakland was a beautiful plain about four miles wide from the bay to the base of the hills and about ten leagues long from north to south. The trees were in clusters and in full foliage and clover covered the ground. The trees were the resort of countless birds throughout the year. The hills and plains were covered with numerous herds of wild cattle [Baker 1914:356].

In May of 1852, Edward Bosqui traveled near Oakland and wrote:

> Beyond a short distance from Oakland there were no improvements whatever, not even a fence. The country was an open uncultivated plain. No one supposed at that time that the land was susceptible of cultivation, or good for anything but pasture land. It was not held to be worth over two dollars an acre. The plains and foothills were covered with a luxuriant growth of wild oats, clover, and wild flowers, and alive with quail, blackbirds and meadow larks [Bosqui 1904:46].

The profusion of wildlife near the estuary and in the groves of trees was recognized by early visitors, who remarked upon the smelt that turned the estuary silver, the shell mounds made of generations of oyster and mussel shells, and the abundant game-bird population, as well as deer and bear that came down from the hills. The commercial possibilities of developing Oakland as a place of recreation for San Franciscans were not overlooked.

> Mr. Burrell came over here on a hunting excursion in 1852 and found Carpentier, Adams, and Moon engaged in laying out the town. They offered him two lots if he would erect a hotel. Mr. Burrell considered the matter for a while and at last accepted their proposition. It was made because he was a builder by occupation. He was told that such a house was needed there to accommodate travellers, hunting parties, picnics, and others who came over from San Francisco in small boats. The hotel was the first built in town and was leased to Ames and Kelly, who conducted it for a while, but finally sold their lease. It was at the northwest corner of First and Broadway . . . a large party of young men came over from San Francisco in the steamboat *Hector*--about 150 of them--and held a house-warming in the unfinished building. The young men had plenty of money and enjoyed themselves in sports of various kinds, one of which was kicking ten-dollar silk hats about the grounds. Native oysters and edible birds formed the basis of their Sunday dinner at the hotel, which received about $500 from their guests. The weather was fine, the surroundings beautiful [Baker 1914:357].

The Project Area on the 1857 Coast Survey

The 1857 Coast Survey Map provides the first graphic representation of the project area, and is by far the most detailed source of site-specific information on the natural setting of West Oakland, since most of the West Oakland area at that time remained substantially unaltered from its natural state. Within the project area, the only cultural modifications shown are the lines of surveys, the tentative outlines of later roads and the routes of paths that were actually used, together with a few dwellings and Gibbons' Pier at the end of the alignment of Seventh Street.

Partly because West Oakland was not hilly, contour lines do not appear within the project area on the 1857 Coast Survey Map. Nonetheless, the patterns of vegetation and drainage give a good idea of the gently sloping topography. The estuary of San Antonio Creek, extending into what would later become Lake Merritt, divided two groves of woods approximately equidistant from the estuary. One woodland ran the length of Alameda; the other extended westward from central Oakland almost to the bay at Oakland Point. Each of these strips of woods represented the higher and drier ground that oak forests favor. These groves gave way to open grasslands and then to marshes cut by winding channels, as the land very gradually fell towards the San Antonio Estuary. Within the project area, the belt of woods was generally bounded on the south by the present alignment of Fifth Street, continuing to the north at least as far as the alignment of Twelfth Street.

The large marsh shown north of the San Antonio Estuary on the 1857 Coast Survey Map extended into Blocks 7-16 of the project area, between Linden and Center streets. A channel bordered by marsh ran from Third and Kirkham northeasterly as far as Blocks 7 and 8, bounded by Linden, Adeline, Fifth, and Seventh streets. This channel was the outlet of a stream that crossed Seventh at Adeline; the creek was large enough to require, in later years, that the railway tracks on Seventh run across a trestle at Adeline. This trestle appears in the 1870 Snow & Roos bird's-eye view seen in Plate 8.

Farther to the west, another branching channel extended north of Third Street and the future Southern Pacific yards between Kirkham and Henry streets. Project Blocks 15 and 16, were traversed by this channel, which formed a low and marshy area. This low-lying area was not filled entirely until the Southern Pacific imported sufficient dirt and rocks from cuttings elsewhere on its East Bay lines, along with dredge spoils from the Alameda Estuary, to create a foundation for a freight terminal constructed circa 1910. Vernon Sappers describes this:

> Adeline Street was a creek crossed by a trestle, later filled to the south for the S. P. freight terminal. Some of this fill came from the Oakland tidal canal. The S.P. had tracks laid on High Street in Alameda, and the trains ran along them and were then routed along through East Oakland to West Oakland to be dumped as fill for the freight terminal. Other fill used here came from elsewhere on the S. P.-- some from the northern line along Contra Costa, some from Niles Canyon to the south [Sappers/Olmsted interview, April 2, 1993].

At Oakland Point, the original shoreline of the bay crossed project Blocks 27, 29, 30, 31, and 34. On the 1857 Coast Survey Map, Gibbons' Pier is shown extending out into the bay near the alignment of Seventh Street at the farthest extension of Oakland Point.

The Marsh Transformed

As development within the project area generally followed the line of Seventh Street from Market to the west, the street itself became a transportation route; as such, in many places it defined commercial development in West Oakland. The railroad tracks on First Street, with the large railroad freight yards to the south, defined the areas of heavier industrial development.

> On a modern land use map, industrial areas mark almost exactly the outline of the old West Oakland marsh, while residential areas spread solidly west from downtown on the historic dry land along rail and transit lines, and north in a strip along San Pablo Avenue [Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey 1990 (2):5].

As Oakland's population expanded in the 1870s, the marshland and the estuary were used as outlets for raw sewage. What had been an admired fishing and hunting region in the 1850s had become the object of serious concern for public health in the 1880s.

> The West Oakland Improvement Association was organized in 1888-1889 for the purpose of securing the reclamation of the West Oakland marsh and its transformation from a pestilential hole to a beautiful park. . . . 15 men met in a dingy room on Peralta Street and during several meetings consulted on what was best to be done to secure the cooperation of the authorities. The hat was passed around to raise money to pay for the room. Finally open meetings were held, the newspapers began to give accounts of the proceedings and more prominent citizens began to attend [Baker 1914: 401].

Even after West Oakland became a densely populated community, the natural produce of the shoreline of the bay continued to be of some importance. The *West of Market Boys' Journal* describes how mussels, clams, and oysters in the mudflats provided free food to West Oaklanders in hard times, just as the washed up driftwood could be gathered as free fuel for stoves. In his book *The Valley of the Moon*, Jack London details the struggle of a woman deprived of income during the bitter, hard-fought, 1901 teamsters strike:

> By going out the *Transit* slip, by climbing down the piles on a precarious ladder of iron spikes, and by crossing a boom of logs, she won access to the Rock Wall that extended far out into the bay and that served as a barrier between the mudflats and tide-scoured channel of Oakland Estuary. Here the fresh sea breeze blew and Oakland sank down to a smudge of smoke behind her. . . . Especially she liked the Rock Wall. There was a freedom about it. . . . Everything was free. Firewood lay about for the taking. No man sold it by the sack. Small boys fished with poles from the rocks, with no one to drive them away for trespass. . . . And here was food, food that was free. She watched the small boys on a day when she had eaten nothing, and emulated them, gathering mussels from the rocks at low water, cooking them by placing them among the coals of a fire she built on top of the wall. . . . She learned to knock small oysters from the rocks. . . . One flood tide she found the water covered with muskmelons. They bobbed and bumped along up the estuary in countless thousands. . . . But each and every melon--she patiently tried scores of them--had been spoiled by a sharp gash that let in salt water. . . . "They do it, the people who have too much . . . it's to keep up the price. They throw them overboard in San Francisco" [1913a:249-253].

But London's heroine is warned not to eat mussels from the estuary. Too many people in Oakland are dying from contaminated shellfish. A doctor blames typhoid for the deaths, from contamination from the sewage in the estuary. Later, she encounters another source of disease:

> She found herself on the far end of the wall. . . . It was the time of the full moon, and the unusual high tide covered the rocks. She was knee deep in the water, and about her knees swam scores of big rock rats, squeaking and fighting, scrambling to climb upon her out of the flood. She screamed with fright and horror, and kicked at them. Some dived and swam away under water [London 1913a:261].

It is significant that, to London--who loved San Francisco Bay and sailed on it from his childhood--the West Oakland shoreline was a place of filth, evoking vivid horror. The late 19th-century shoreline in West Oakland had been dramatically transformed by the technology of the age--by the steam-shovel, the railroad pier, the breakwaters, the sewer system, and all the waste products of man, beast, and industry. The transformation took place quickly; in the 1860s, the shore was still a natural place, a functioning ecosystem. By 1900 the rats were the least of its problems--the contamination had become so bad that the local sea life was unfit for human consumption. The period of London's youth coincided with the rapid spoilation of what could have been West Oakland's natural backyard.

THE RANCHO PERIOD: PERALTAS & SQUATTERS (1822-1852)

The Legacy of Don Luis Peralta

The land granted to Sgt. Luis Maria Peralta in 1822 by the Governor Pablo Vincene de Sola of California comprised about 44,800 acres in the region known as *Contra Costa*--the "Opposite Shore" from the main settlement on the San Francisco peninsula. Rancho San Antonio was the name that Peralta gave his holdings, which today would comprise all of Berkeley, Oakland, Emeryville, Piedmont, Alameda, Albany, and part of San Leandro.

Precise studies made by J. N. Bowman in 1945 mapped the site of each adobe house, with all known ancillary structures, that had belonged to Luis Peralta's four sons and heirs: Vincente on Temescal Creek, Domingo on Codornices Creek, Antonio at Fruitdale, and Ignacio on San Leandro Creek. Luis Peralta, himself, never lived on his Rancho San Antonio, preferring to raise his large family to the south, on his Santa Clara rancho, near San Jose.

Since Bowman's research established that none of the Peralta adobe sites is in or near the project area, Peralta's grant is described not for its direct archaeological potential, but rather to give an historical context to land use in West Oakland. In addition, the legal depositions of various parties are used as sources of primary information about specific local physical conditions, not otherwise published.

The Peralta grant is a classic illustration of the Spanish-Mexican land-title controversy that pitted local squatters and speculators against the land-rich Californios. The Peralta claims stemmed from Spanish land policy that dated from 1768, and wound their way from the California Land Commission decisions of the 1850s, through the courts of the United States until 1910. Historians who witnessed this intensely felt controversy were divided as to the fairness and justice of the process. H. H. Bancroft wrote in 1884:

> It was to the Californians owning lands under genuine and valid titles, seven eighths of the claimants . . . that great wrong was done. They were virtually robbed by the government that was bound to protect them. As a rule, they lost nearly all their possessions in the struggle before the successive tribunals to escape from real and imaginary dangers of total loss. The lawyers took immense fees in land and cattle, often for a slight service or none at all. It was in no sense the protection promised by the treaty to finally confirm a title after a struggle of eight to twenty-five years when it was simply confiscation, and that not in the real interests of the United States, or of the American settlers, but of speculating land sharpers [1884:(4) 576-577].

Bancroft's indignation at the hypocritical process by which the great ranchos of California were dissolved has to be countered by the knowledge that the thinly spread Spanish colonization

of California was at the expense of the local inhabitants, who did not willingly give up the land and their culture. "In 1805, Corporal Luis Peralta--head of the Mission [San Jose] local guard from 1789 to 1800--retaliated against an eastern *rancheria* whose warriors had wounded the new padre, Father Pedro Cueva, and slain his mayordomo when they went out to minister to sick neophytes. Peralta took 25 prisoners--all women--and left five men dead" (Weber 1981:32).

If it had been possible for the United States government to use force to back up the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which gave the Mexican-Californios their American citizenship and backed up Commodore John Sloat's promises assuring them of their property rights, then any attempts by squatters to seize rancho property could have been repelled by military force. In the instance of the Rancho San Antonio, the theoretical outcome could have left four Peralta families holding 44,662 acres (as a confirmed grant). Would-be settlers could have leased farms from year to year, or generation to generation. A similar legal outcome resulted in vast private holdings in Hawaii being leased in perpetuity.

It was the considered opinion of most observers that if the 700 valid land claims had been confirmed immediately, the owners of these ranchos (who were invariably hard pressed for cash) would have gladly sold small tracts to settlers for homes or farms at reasonable prices. In the excitement of the Gold Rush, from 1848 to 1850, the whole question of Mexican land titles was put aside. But in anticipation of legal questions that were bound to arise, confidential agents of the United States combed the archives--then in considerable disarray--of the California missions and records in Mexico City for some semblance of land surveys and documents that could be used as legal proof in United States courts.

The documents were assembled in one place and finally collected into 300 books of 800 pages each, "some pages worn and stained, a few with musket holes shot through," but the original subject indexes were disregarded (T. Hittell 1885 [1]:226). Their generally haphazard rearrangement meant that papers relating to the missions might turn up in military matters, and questions regarding land grants might be anywhere, in any order. Most of the documents were in Spanish and there was much disagreement in American legal circles as to intentions and meanings of various phrases. This might not have been so important had it not turned out that paper claims were the basis for most of the legal decisions that confirmed or denied titles.

Hoping to settle the messy problem of Mexican land claims in California, Congress created the U.S. Land Commission. Appointed in March of 1851, the three commissioners with their support staff (only one could read Spanish) were to serve for three years. By then, it was hoped, the tangle of land ownership of these large Spanish-Mexican holdings would be unsnarled--if not to everyone's satisfaction, at least without bloodshed. The life of the U.S. Land Commission was extended to 1856, but many cases were still in dispute in 1880, and one Peralta claim was still being contested in 1885 (Bancroft 1885 [4]:576).

The burden of proof of ownership necessarily lay on the claimants. They had the right of appeal from the Land Commission to the District Court, and on up to the U.S. Supreme Court,

as did all third parties. "In nearly every case, whatever might have been the decision of the Land Commission, an appeal was taken" (T. Hittell 1885 [2]:754).

Luis Maria Peralta had good reasons to believe in the validity of his Rancho San Antonio claim. The Spanish decree dating back to 1768 "assigned public lands [in New Spain] to be returned to soldiers, and other men of good character" (Martinez 1936:1). At the age of 17, Peralta had made the famous Anza trek from Sonora to Monterey, with his parents, sister, and three brothers, to colonize northern California. He had followed his father's example of military service and joined the King's army when he was 23. And when stationed at the Presidio, he married another famous Anza party member, Maria Loreto Alviso; together, the couple had produced 17 children--9 of whom reached maturity.

Peralta had quite properly filed his claim to the Rancho San Antonio, as early as 1820, with Don Pablo Vicente de Sola, the last Spanish governor of California and the first governor under the Mexican regime. When his grant was approved, he had followed the governor's instructions under the appointed supervision of Lt. Ygnacio Martinez: to make a journey to secure "in possession of the lands petitioned for and to place landmarks on the four points of the compass, that it may be known at all times the extent of said lands which have been granted to him" (Banks v. Moreno, 59 CAL:233).

The ceremony of the occasion of Peralta's possession of Rancho San Antonio is described by Ygnacio Peralta:

> The lieutenant took out the papers of my father's title and proceeded to read them. He ordered to be brought some earth and he then threw the earth towards the four winds. He ordered the soldiers who came as witnesses to discharge their muskets. The lieutenant asked my father into what point he wished to have possession. My father said that he wished possession given him of the land which the deep creek of San Leandro bounds. . . . When we arrived at the brook of the Cerrito, my father said, "Unto this point, Signor, I wish possession."
>
> Then we disposed ourselves to eat at the small willow grove beside the fresh water of the estero, but we did not eat because of the mosquitos. Instead, we went upstream to a point where there was fresh water and there had lunch. After eating, the lieutenant, turning to large rock at the foot of the hill, said to my father, "Sergeant, that rock may serve as a monument". . . . The landmark was composed of stones brought from some distance off and of different color from the large rocks which were placed in the cleft by myself and my brother, Antonio, by the order of the lieutenant, he assisting us.
>
> The lieutenant asked my father unto what other point he wished to receive possession. My father answered, "I wish to run to the summit of the hills where there is a gap, or notch, as I desire to have natural landmarks." The lieutenant replied, "It is well." We did not go to gap, but saw it, and pointed towards it. Then we came down and went off towards Mission San Jose [United States v. Peralta, Land Case No. 100, U.S. Court, San Francisco].

As an outcome of this ceremonial survey party of August 1820, under Lieutenant Martinez, the Rancho San Antonio had San Leandro Creek designated as its southern boundary, and a rivulet running down from the mountain by the foot of Mt. San Antonio (a small mountain) marked as the northern boundary. San Francisco Bay became the natural western boundary, but no attempt was made to define the eastern boundary, nor was the exact extent of the land specified (Martinez 1936:10). It was the vague description of the eastern boundary that would give rise to some of Luis Peralta's future legal problems.

In October 1820, the padres of the Mission San Francisco disputed Peralta's northern boundary, protesting that he had taken possession of land they used for sheep grazing. Captain Arguello, Commandante of the Presidio, defended Peralta's claim, carried out under his appointed lieutenant: "Even leaving out the question of his [Peralta's] miliary service of about 40 years, he has rendered many services to the Missions of San Francisco, Santa Clara, San Jose and Santa Cruz . . . a great part of his health has almost been sacrificed in repeated excursions to collect his missing herd" (Martinez 1936:11). However, the governor sustained the mission fathers' complaint and had Peralta's northern boundary slightly redefined "at a rivulet issuing from the mountain or hill range, which runs down to the beach, where is a little forest of willows, fixing in said place the four landmarks which shall be valid, and not those which were designated before on the little mountain of San Antonio" (*Alta California* February 8, 1854).

In accordance with the conditions of the land grant, a small adobe house was built in the present Fruitvale area in 1821, within the one-year limit. Don Luis' cattle had been driven to Rancho San Antonio from San Jose at the end of 1820, and a hide-covered log and dirt shelter was built for the *vaqueros* (Fibel 1971:6). Peralta's four sons built their first adobe homes on Rancho San Antonio in the period from 1822 to 1841. "Each brother built himself a house, and took there his wife, and reared his children, and the whole four rejoined in large herds of cattle" (Halley 1876:442).

Each son selected a place with a nearby creek, choosing homesites scattered at widely different places on the immense pasture land, undoubtedly in anticipation of their eventual inheritance. "In August of 1842 Don Luis Peralta came up from San Jose and divided the estate between his sons. Ygnacio received the southerly part of the tract, the sites of Fruitvale and San Leandro; Antonio was given the present East Oakland and Alameda; Vincente, the site of Oakland proper; and Domingo received the northerly section, the sites of Berkeley and Albany" (Martinez 1936:16). For the next decade, the Peraltas would raise their families and live the easy, if isolated, life of cattle raising on their rancho.

> There were pastured about 5,000 head of cattle on Rancho San Antonio worth about a dollar a head when the Americans arrived. Mounted caballeros were about the only visitors who exchanged horses at the corrals. At San Antonio ranch in East Oakland was a bull ring where fights took place on Sundays, attended by the padres and laity after mass. The bull ring was described as "an inclosure with a

high fence and with the circle for the raging bull and his tormentors, eats for spectators, pits for bulls and bears and numerous picadores, matadores, bandererllors, etc. on horseback" . . . . These fights were practiced until 1854 when the legislature made them illegal [Baker 1914:30].

William Heath Davis Almost Founds Oakland: William Heath Davis had arrived in California in 1831 and counted himself a great friend and admirer of the Peralta family. Having married the daughter of Jose Joaquim Estudillo, Davis was perhaps more completely won over to the rancho culture of the Californios than most other observers and writers of that period. H. H. Bancroft, who handled his first manuscript, *Glimpses of the Past*, was concerned over Davis' "tendency to eulogize everybody," and expressed doubt, but hope, that, "all the early Californians are as good as he paints them" (Davis 1929:ix). In his book, *Seventy-Five Years in California*, Davis recounts how, in his own words, "The Author Almost Founds Oakland":

> In my travels around the bay on business I had observed a picturesque spot for a town on the estuary of San Antonio, due east from San Francisco. The site was known in early times as Encinal de Temescal, on Vicente Peralta's portion of the division of the Rancho San Antonio, segregated by Don Luis Peralta, his father. This site is the present city of Oakland.
>
> My relation with Don Vicente was good, socially and commercially. In the fall of 1846 he was in my store making purchases. I told him I had a proposition to make for his consideration, and I desired him to dine with me that evening. After dinner I broached the matter by saying to him, "You are the owner of the Encinal de Temescal and there is a spot on that part of your rancho that pleases me for a town." He wanted to know the exact location of the place, and I pointed it out to him on a rough map I had prepared for the purpose. I offered him $5,000 cash for two-thirds of the Encinal, to build a church of his faith, also to construct a wharf and run a ferryboat from San Francisco to the intended town, all of which to be at my cost and expense. Whenever sales of lots were made, we would both sign the deeds and each take his pro rata of the money. Don Vicente, in reply to my talk, said that he would take the matter under advisement and let me know.
>
> He inquired the extent of the land I sought to purchase. I described it to him on my sketch, which made Fifteenth Street from the bay to Lake Merritt the northern boundary, and thence from Lake Merritt, following the meandering of the shore boundary of the present city of Oakland, to the intersection of Fifteenth Street with the shoreline of the bay of San Francisco. When we met again Don Vicente was not prepared to give me an answer.
>
> While my mind was full of my project, I interviewed and explained to . . . . the leading citizens of San Francisco my program for a "Brooklyn" for San Francisco--an outlet for the coming city. Each of these gentlemen was willing and anxious to buy a block or more of land for a retreat so near the metropolis whenever I completed my arrangements with Peralta and mapped the town.
>
> During my numerous conversations with him at various times on the subject before me, I told him that if he declined to accept my generous offer he would suffer essentially, from a business standpoint; that his land would be squatted on, and his

cattle slaughtered without his knowledge at night by evildoers, and the meat shipped to San Francisco and sold. (Beef was selling here at retail from three-quarters of a dollar to one dollar per pound.) . . . . That if he sold me the land I would have the tract inclosed at once with a good fence; I would start the town with the best and wealthiest people of San Francisco, which would be a bodyguard against the appropriation of his property without his knowledge and consent.

"Well," he said. "I must get the consent of my father for my action in the matter." This was simply done to put me off, as he hated to part with any land, although convinced it would be for his benefit to put some of his possessions into money. It was the old notion of the big rancheros . . . to have leagues of land with thousands of animals.

I went to see his father [Don Luis Peralta] at the city of San Jose, accompanied by James Alexander Forbes . . . who knew the old man well. Old Peralta said that the land I desired to buy from his son Vicente absolutely belonged to the latter. I persevered in my project year after year, to induce Don Vicente to yield to my liberal offer, as I considered I was doing him a kindness. But it was of no avail, and the stubborn man stood alone in his singular notion, against the judgment and advice of his good wife, of the British vice-consul (his brother-in-law), of the Catholic priest, and other friends of Don Vicente, all of whom advised him to accept my proposition by all means.

In the meantime, boatmen from San Francisco were bringing meat from the cattle belonging to Vicente Peralta to the city. These cattle were killed with rifles in the night, under the shadow of the Encinal, by parties who had already squatted on his lands. At one time Peralta and a vaquero came suddenly on a party of men, in the night, who were quartering a beef preparatory to shipment to San Francisco. The squatters immediately pointed their guns at Peralta and his *vaquero*, who departed in order to save their lives.

This slaughtering of his animals began as early as 1848, before the discovery of gold. In the forepart of 1850 I made my last call on Don Vicente on this business, to renew once more my offer. At this time the Encinal de Temescal was well covered with squatters. But I received the same reply as before. Probably the loss to Peralta in cattle would exceed $100,000. . . .

He sold the site that I wanted to buy from him in the fall of I850 to Colonel Jack Hays, Major John C. Caperton, Colonel Irving, Alexander Cost, John Frener and others, for $10,000, after spending more than the amount he received, in fruitless lawsuits, for the possession of his lands from the squatters. Everything that I had predicted to Peralta, several years before the date above named, proved to be reality, and he lost a large fortune [Davis 1929:251-253].

H.H. Bancroft estimated that by 1840 there were no more than 800 *gente de razon* at San Francisco, Sonoma, Contra Costa, and on the Peninsula. Large families with 12 to 15 children were usual, a fact that some foreign observers attributed to the inherent fecundity of California's climate. In little more than a generation, most *Californios* in the bay region were related to one another (Bancroft 1884 [3]:698).

> In California, the most important type of family was that of the ranchero. All lines of dependency radiated outward from his *casa* and embraced his children, his in-laws, other relatives, orphans, a bevy of Indian servants, sometimes also the residents of the nearest village . . . [Pitt 1970:11].

The importance of his family to Don Luis Maria Peralta was demonstrated by the supreme effort that he made in his great old age to insure that his descendants would be able to keep the Rancho San Antonio intact--safe from the encroachment of squatters and from the legal maneuvers of various speculators. He had already been approached many times to sell his land, both by those he trusted, like William Heath Davis, and by those whom he did not trust, like Horace Carpentier, as this one exchange illustrates:

> Probate Judge Watson, a despondent lawyer employed by Carpentier, describes his encounter with Luis Peralta: I was employed by H. W. Carpentier to make a purchase of land for him and went to see him on the subject. And he would not sell his land, Rancho San Antonio. He said, "The King of Spain gave me this land. They say he will not come back. I believe he will. He will come and say, 'Peralta, where is the land I gave you?' How could I face him?" [Martinez 1936:42].

When Don Luis Peralta had reached the age of 93, and was blind in one eye but still in possession of his mental powers, he requested the only lawyer he trusted, Alexander Forbes (married to the sister of Vincent Peralta's wife), to revise his will to avoid future disputes.

> One morning in June, 1851, Attorney Forbes, Dr. Divini of San Jose, and Father Nobile of Santa Clara Mission went to Luis Peralta's old adobe to aid in the arrangements relating to the signing of a will involving property in excess of one million dollars. His holdings were later appraised at $1,383,500. Forbes read the will in a loud voice to Don Luis. The two sisters, Josepha and Guadalupe, were present but the sons were not. The sisters cried; Dr. Divini told them it was not necessary to be downcast.
>
> After the reading, Don Luis took the will and said, "I had better go to the light to sign." He then went to a nearby window and with his one eye, for he had lost the other, he read the will and signed it. The will was witnessed by Father Nobile, Dr. Divini, and Alexander Forbes.
>
> The daughters were given the San Jose residence and orchard. The cattle were distributed between the sons and daughters. Possession of the Rancho San Antonio was confirmed to the old men. His children were admonished to eschew all avaricious ambition and not to enter into any foolish differences [Martinez 1936:46-47].

Within two months, in August 1851, Don Luis had developed a serious chest infection and influenza. On August 26, 1851, he died and was buried in the Mission Santa Clara--the place that he had helped to found as a young man. When H. H. Bancroft chose to characterize Don Luis Peralta, he included, a Peralta quotation, taken down in an earlier interview:

> In the midst of the Gold Rush excitement, however, there were men that remained calm, and here and there were those who regarded not the products of the Sierra foothills as the greatest good. Luis Peralta, who had lived near a century, called to him his sons, themselves approaching threescore years and said: "My sons, God has given this gold to the Americans. Had He desired us to have it, He would have given it to us ere now. Therefore, go not after it, but let others go. Plant your lands and reap. These be your best gold-fields, for all must eat while they live" [1885 (6):65].

Luis Peralta's children ignored final admonishment of the family patriarch and "entered into foolish differences" over his estate. Peralta's will left the major land shares to his sons. Attorneys representing Peralta's surviving daughter and the children of a deceased daughter protested that Don Luis' great age had affected his mental processes and invalidated his will. However, the courts "rejected the contention that he was *non compos mentis* at the time. Rancho San Antonio was thereby confirmed to this four sons" (Martinez 1936:53). Attorneys representing the squatters and their descendants filed appeal after appeal in their efforts to claim portions of the Peralta land.

> For the legitimate land purchaser from the Peralta brothers there were years of doubts as to whether the land they had bought and built their homes on and were cultivating as farms, might ultimately be confirmed to an early squatter. Often lawyers were paid in land, or if the Peraltas borrowed money against their land, interest rates of 20 percent or more, usual in that time, quickly ate up the money they realized when they sold the property to those who would buy a clear title contingent upon the final decision of the courts [Fibel 1971:19].

The economic effect of two decades of legal controversy over land titles was to slow down the development of Oakland and allow speculators, such as Horace W. Carpentier, to take advantage of the widespread confusion over land ownership and the public squabbling between various claimants.

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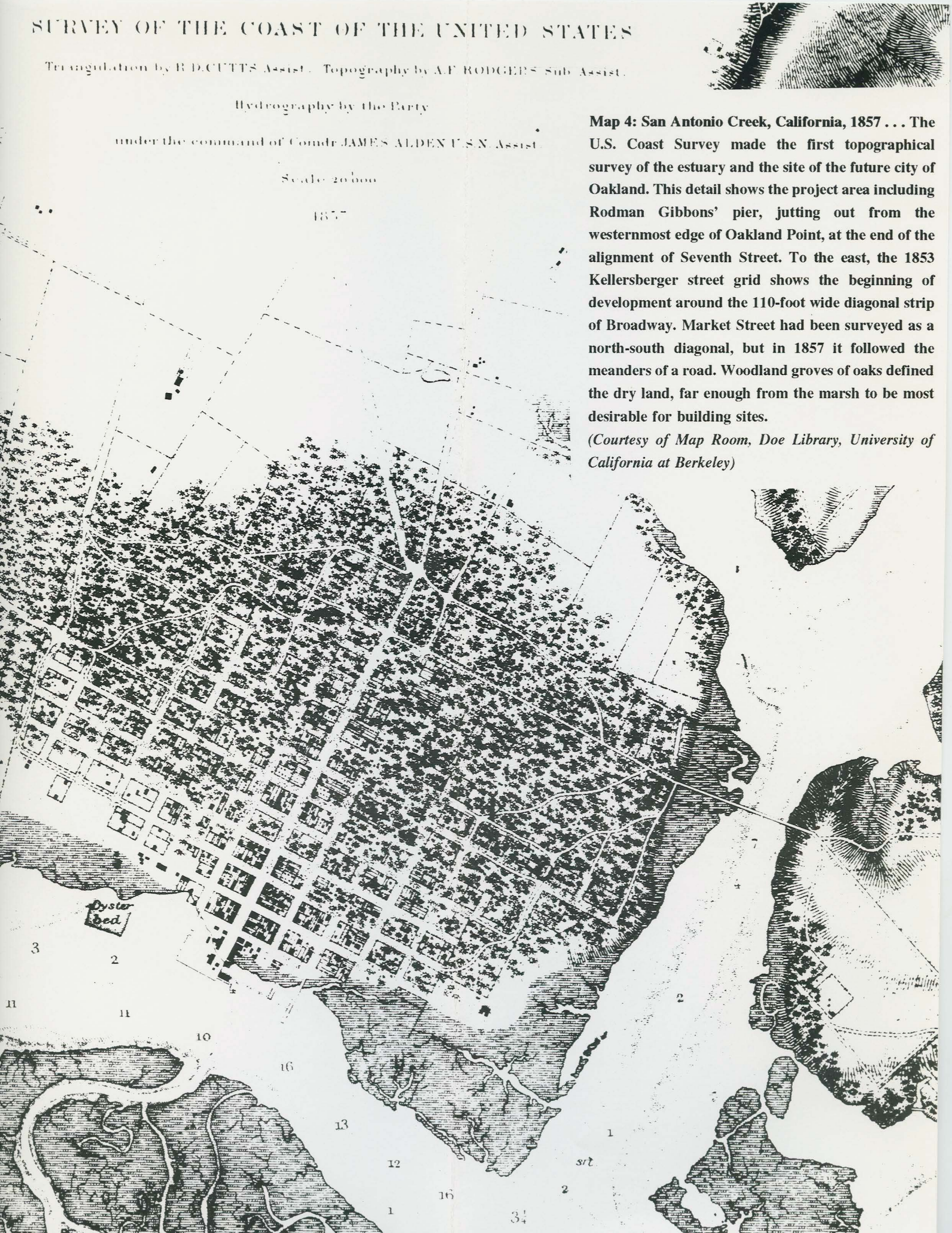


Map 4: San Antonio Creek, California, 1857 . . . The U.S. Coast Survey made the first topographical survey of the estuary and the site of the future city of Oakland. This detail shows the project area including Rodman Gibbons' pier, jutting out from the westernmost edge of Oakland Point, at the end of the alignment of Seventh Street. To the east, the 1853 Kellersberger street grid shows the beginning of development around the 110-foot wide diagonal strip of Broadway. Market Street had been surveyed as a north-south diagonal, but in 1857 it followed the meanders of a road. Woodland groves of oaks defined the dry land, far enough from the marsh to be most desirable for building sites.

(Courtesy of Map Room, Doe Library, University of California at Berkeley)

LAND DISPUTES AND THE PERALTA RANCHO (1852-1863)

Squatters and Settlers

San Francisco had some experience with squatters occupying the contested DeHaro property near Mission Bay during the 1850s and 1860s; consequently, there was great local celebration when the courts rejected the claims of the descendants of Francesco DeHaro on May 2, 1867. But as early as 1849, the greater portion of the city of San Francisco had been parceled out and sold to many individual lot holders. With immense amounts of capital from the Gold Rush flowing into the city, real-estate speculation centered along the city's waterfront, where waterlots sold in the early 1850s were sold and resold with staggering profits, until many titles were tied up in court fights for proof of possession. Continuous improvements to the city's wharves and waterlots were made by many private individuals who had much to gain by filling their waterlots, building warehouses to store merchandise, and extending their wharves farther out to accommodate shipping.

Even allowing for the head start of Yerba Buena village at the cove with easy access to deep water for shipping, it was the availability of large amounts of capital in many hands, plus the freedom from long-drawn-out title controversy over early grants, that combined to give San Francisco an estimated population in 1859 of 78,083 (Langley 1859:2), whereas Oakland counted only 1,553 inhabitants by 1860 (Buckingham 1947:57).

Various squatters camped out on the several Peralta ranchos for different reasons. Some, like the early loggers of the late 1840s and 1850s, were primarily up in the hills to log redwood. At some point, the Peraltas must have become concerned about these ventures, which involved hundreds of men operating steam-driven sawmills, cutting up timbers that were transported by oxen teams down to the estuary. Here redwood was either loaded onto flat-bottom scows, or lashed together in rafts, to be floated over to San Francisco, where lumber fetched high prices. It is not recorded whether this redwood harvest was shared in some way with the Peraltas. But what began as early as 1830 with a few lumbermen who had jumped ship, reached a fever pitch "by 1853 when there were three to four hundred men in the hills, a larger population than any East Bay town. . . By 1860 not a single original tree remained" (Bagwell 1982:16-19 passim).

Among those who came to log redwood in 1850, but upon observing the "undulating fields of luxuriant grass," changed their minds and decided to stay and farm, were the Patten brothers: Robert, William, and Edward.

> Through a Frenchman living in a tent near San Antonio Creek, they negotiated with Antonio Maria Peralta and obtained a lease of 160 acres. The Pattens met one Moses Chase, living in a tent at the foot of Broadway. Chase had preceded them by a few

months and was passing the time in hunting while recuperating from illness, preparatory to returning home back east. The brothers persuaded him to join them. They cleared 100 acres and planted it in wheat and barley. Their venture prospered, and in 1851, the Pattens leased an additional 300 acres for a term of eight years [Baker 1914:49-50].

There was a considerable difference between those who came and reaped, and left, and those who persisted through often difficult negotiations to lease or buy land from the four Peralta brothers. Whereas the Patten brothers successfully negotiated to lease farm land, Col. Henry S. Fitch had more ambitious hopes for Rancho San Antonio:

> A Colonel Henry S. Fitch of San Francisco came to Rancho San Antonio in 1850 and perceiving the tremendous real estate values involved induced Antonio Peralta to promise to give him a deed for 2400 acres for $8000. Fitch saw what he supposed to be a river, passing along the margin of this beautiful spot [East Oakland]. He knew not how far into the interior it ran. He knew that it emptied into the great bay immediately opposite San Francisco; that its waters were evidently navigable for a large class of vessels; that it possessed great natural advantages for building a city in coming time . . . a verbal agreement to convey on the part of Peralta (who could not be induced to sign a paper written in English) was obtained. He gave his word of honor that on the payment of the sum before 15 days he would make to said Fitch a deed for the property.
>
> Col. Fitch returned to the city. . . . He persuaded Col. Whitney of San Francisco to take the requisite sum of money and go with him to obtain the deed. On arriving at the debarkation they discovered a small shanty, about 7 by 10, roughly made . . . to fulfill the double use of place to sleep and screen for some hunting. . . .The occupant stated that he had constructed it for his own occupation--knew nothing about who owned the land--and stated that if it belonged to a rancher, he would buy what he wanted, if for sale, or go from it, when he was obliged to. . . .Col. Whitney began to show signs of weakness. . . . Troubles with squatters marvelously multiplied in his mind, and the apprehension of losing his money weighed heavily on his soul [Baker 1914:442].

In spite of his most persuasive arguments, Col. Fitch could not restore Whitney's confidence that his money invested in the rancho would see great profit. "You will die tearing your hair for the mistake of your life this day made," was his bitter pronouncement (Baker 1914:442).

Founders of Oakland

Three squatters who persisted, and whose names reappear on land title litigation for several decades, were Horace W. Carpentier, Edson Adams, and A. J. Moon. According to one account, the trio had theorized that the land they wanted no longer belonged to the Peraltas but to the government. In defiance of Vincente Peralta, they built a small house in May of 1850 on what would become the foot of Broadway--that first favored landing where firm land met the waters

of San Antonio Creek. Peralta, however, obtained a county court writ to eject the trio and proceeded with a posse under Deputy Sheriff Kelly.

> This posse consisted of 10 or 12 men, and arriving at Vincent Peralta's residence, it was joined by a reinforcement of native Californians, the friends and retainers of the rightful owner of the soil. Before proceeding to assault the 16 by 12 shanty of trespassers. . .the party was entertained by the Californian . . . they were treated to tortillas, roast beef, beans. . . . Peralta's reinforcement consisted of about forty mounted men who wore the usual Mexican costume of leather breeches, buttoned down the sides, broad sombreros, and bright-colored sashes . . . .Fifty doughty warriors formed in double file, Peralta riding alongside of Kelley, and his native forces bringing up the rear.
>
> Arriving at the shanty, they found Moon alone . . . .The Deputy Sheriff informed him of the object of his visit . . . . Moon listened quietly to the complaint, and was calm and complacent, and affected great astonishment at the proceedings. He protested that there was nothing further from his intentions, and of his associates, than to do Don Peralta, whom he affected to esteem highly, any injury. . . .
>
> Peralta complained of the many wrongs he was enduring, and said it was absolutely necessary for his protection that trespassers of all kinds should be punished . . . . Moon displayed the smoothness of his tongue and the wiliness of his way, the party that came so fully armed were completely disarmed by his innocent manner and abundant promises. The writer has been informed by a friend of Carpentier & Company, that at the very time Mr. Moon was talking so smoothly and appeared so reasonable, a party of armed ruffians, headed by the notorious Billy Mulligan was in ambush close by, ready to contest possession, if needs be [Baker 1914:356].

In *Oakland, The Story of a City*, Bagwell has the three squatters leasing land from Vincente Peralta, and then proceeding illegally to lay out the town and sell lots. In her footnote, she comments: "Historians still dispute whether the three deliberately defrauded the Peraltas or whether they believed, like so many others at the time, that U.S. sovereignty superseded Mexican claims and opened the way for legitimate claims by American citizens as claims on public land" (1982:27).

By 1852 there were about 50 squatters in tents and shanties, each claiming 160 acres of Rancho San Antonio as homesteaders:

> There was no regular ferry. Sloops and skiffs were used to cross the bay. There was a variable population--here today and gone tomorrow. Malachi Fallon came here in 1852 and bought of Harper a contract for tract of land from the Peraltas, but Carpentier and his associates burned the Harper tent in his absence and squatted in the tract. Fallon bought ten acres at Oak and Seventh streets on which he built a house and remained though the land was claimed by others [Baker 1914:357].

Protest against the effect of unrestrained American squatters on the Peralta land was made in this eloquent communication from an unknown writer in the *Daily Alta California*, July 12, 1853:

The writer asserted that he resided: in a part of the country [Alameda] where until recently was nearly all the domain of the Spaniard. . . . He observed that he saw daily illustrations of the effects of unrestrained American squatterism which in the older states of our Republic would put the offender upon a diet of bread and water. . . . I am living on a part of a domain granted in 1820 . . . by Spain. The grantee recently died and his children, one of them seventy years of age, with his children's children about him, now occupy, and have since the year above mentioned, continued to occupy and use the land . . . described in their grant, from the ridge of the mountain where the water begins to fall, to the border of the bay. From the deep water of one creek into the water of another. These natural mountains still exist, and three of them are visible from almost every part of the ranch.

The extent of the grant is familiar to every resident upon and about it, and within these limits, are, I may safely say, thousands of high-minded, honest, conscientious settlers demanding nothing but what is right and submitting to nothing that is wrong, perjury, abhorring Republicans, who have made and are making their affidavits . . . that "to the best of their knowledge and belief, that said lands are not claimed under any existing titles," at the same time they stake out the half miles square immediately about the dwellings of the owner, knowing him to be in the possession of the soil with his thousands of cattle bearing the branded initials of the landlords, and believing him to be the holder of the grant over which his flocks and herds and horses range; they fence them out into the mountains, where less high-minded, less noble, less conscientious, less Republican class of settlers convert the herds into roast and boiled dinners, or a commodity for exchange in the market . . . while the outlaw speculator in stock, like the Vandal and the Goth, drives his portion towards the vine-clad fields of the south for barter and other plunders.

Go to the cabins of the conscientious settler and you will hear him wondering aloud how many years will they keep Peralta's title in court. Pass along the groves or clusters of green oaks upon the fertile plains and you hear the sound of axes and falling trees, and you enter and discover the finest shade trees have been converted into piles of cordwood for market. You ask, why destroy such beautiful shade in a country so sparsely timbered? The reply is "We are clearing the land for cultivation."

Lawyers defend the trespasser as the bone and sinew of the country; improving his possessory claim against a man who has been the owner for 30 years--against man who pays the tax on the very land the robber is despoiling--the tax that supports the school for the squatter's children, that makes the road for the squatter to haul off his produce--the tax that pays the legislator his diem for maintaining the demagogue laws at which the squatter laughs in his sleeve as he reaps the profits of the productive soil and looks upon a ten years perspective enjoyment of quit rent, taxless land, for which he performs service in his fealty to his lord of the ballot box. . . .

Blood has already been spilled and men killed, quarreling over the land and claims, like dogs over a stolen sheep, on this side of the bay--one sheriff among them; and it is the earnest prayer of all good citizens to have some action taken on the claim here. Some of the settlers have expressed their opinion that the land is no doubt the Spaniards, but they may as well improve it as other people; while other settlers boldly avow that the longer they can keep it unsettled, the longer possession and profit they can enjoy, and that this year they have more crops and more money to keep the claim in litigation, and are better able to get the land away from the Spaniard. . . .

Signed, "Alameda" [*Daily Alta California*, July 12, 1853].

Played against this diverse background of would-be settlers, the three purposeful squatters--Adams, Moon, and Carpentier--proceeded to hire a Swiss engineer, Julius Kellersberger, to lay out a grid pattern over their own 480 acres (three 160-acre homesteads), so that they might sell lots and promote the legitimacy of their claim of founding Oakland. That they were successful, was due in large part to the political and legal acumen of Horace Walpole Carpentier, of whom it was said, "Carpentier was a crafty and unscrupulous lawyer and at all times had a better legal standing than those who opposed him, because he was far-sighted and knew how to protect his interests when it came to the final tests in the courts" (Baker 1914:355).

Horace Carpentier graduated from Columbia College in law in 1848, and by his own account arrived in California in 1849. He was 24 when he arrived, about the average age of most 49'ers; unlike most of the argonauts, however, his single-minded ambition propelled him into power politics almost at once. Through his influential friend, State Senator David C. Broderick, he obtained his first political job as Enrolling Clerk in the 1851 California State Legislature. He used this office to effect the passage of a bill incorporating the town of Oakland.

> Oakland's first board of trustees consisted of A.W. Burrell, A.J. Moon, Edson Adams, A. Marrier, and H.W. Carpentier. The latter, however did not qualify. The incorporation of the town was an act unknown to the rest of the squatters, who woke up one morning to find that such an act had been passed. Governor Bigler was warned not to sign the bill, and he refused at first to do so, but. . . arguments more convincing than words were found to prevail upon him, and he changed his mind in this matter [Halley 1876:442].

In that same year, 1852, while Alameda was still a portion of Contra Costa County, an act provided that the stream called San Antonio Creek should be declared navigable from its mouth to the old embarcadero of San Antonio, and no obstruction of navigation be permitted (Baker 1914:90). Again, the fine hand of Carpentier is apparent, protecting his own wharf interests:

> Before the few souls living within the area of the town knew what was happening, the Carpentier-Adams-Moon triumvirate had set up a town government and put through an ordinance making Carpentier the sole owner of the entire waterfront, comprising ten thousand acres of overflowed land, and giving him exclusive right to build wharves, piers, and docks for a period of thirty-seven years, and giving him the privilege of collecting wharfage and dockage. In return for this grant, Carpentier agreed to build three small wharves and a schoolhouse and to pay the town 2 percent of the wharfage receipts. This, shorn of details, was the astonishing transaction that raised the curtain on a bitter legal drama that was to continue until 1911, when at last Oakland regained the waterfront lost at its inception [Scott 1959:34-35].

Carpentier was elected to the California assembly in 1853 and became the City of Oakland's first mayor in 1854. "From 1857 to 1867, he was president of the California State Telegraph Company. . . . He was one of the first stock holders and later a director of the Bank of California" (Weber 1981:48).

While he was developing a variety of other business interests, Carpentier continued to control the development of Oakland's waterfront, selling various large parcels to his relatives. In January of 1853, he sold about a quarter of Oakland's shoreline to his brother Edward Carpentier (then Commissioner of Deeds for California, although his residence was in New York). "In 1854 he sold the rest of his interest in the shoreline to his niece, Harriet N. Carpentier for $60,000. The next April, she bought Edward's quarter for $12,000 and an interest held by John B. Watson for $6,000" (Weber 1981:52). On paper Mayor Carpentier no longer controlled what happened on Oakland's waterfront, but he maintained his control in council meetings and in courts, including the operation of the ferry service, the Contra Costa Navigation Company.

By 1857 the Oakland City Council "steeled itself to file a lawsuit to recover the ownership of the waterfront from Carpentier. . . . In 1859, the California Supreme Court cast doubt on the ability of Oakland's town trustees to have made such an exclusive grant [in 1852] to a private individual. . . meanwhile, the foxy lawyer had induced the state legislature to pass a bill confirming all ordinances sanctioned by the original Oakland board of trustees. The hue over that action shook up the state legislature who repealed it in the very next session" (Weber 1981:54). The legal minuet between Carpentier and frustrated Oaklanders would continue.

Meanwhile, on May 29, 1857, the Settlers' Protective League of Oakland Township met at Three Mile House to counter the decision of the Supreme Court that had confirmed the Peralta grant in 1856:

> California, a far-off territory from the source of its government--distracted by internal feuds--sparsely settled--each citizen carrying the only evidence (their grants) of their respective claims in their pockets--no surveys, no marks or lines that formed boundaries to their claims--no signs of occupancy--the country a continued waste, and often the authenticity and validity of their titles depended upon oral evidence dispersed over the country . . . but little note made of them in the archives of the Territory--it was thus, California came into the United States. . . .
>
> The grantees of the Spanish Government were prevented from perfecting their claims (and we find them all imperfect), surely now the loss sustained by these grantees ought not to fall on the occupier. . . we call for concert of action, support and protection from some source. . . .
>
> Resolved . . . that self-protection and the defense of our rights is one of the first laws of nature . . . we will *not submit* to having our homes wrested from us by violence, and our property taken without proper remuneration [*Alta California*, June 3, 1857].

The long legal battle of the Peraltas to maintain their property had resulted in the loss of most of their inherited wealth. Action against squatters on what was left of their holdings would be unlikely; far more urgent was the collection of rent or sale of land to bring in the cash needed to pay taxes on what land was left. The site of the West Oakland project area would have been included in Vincente Peralta's Temescal rancho: "Vincente Peralta had sold *Encinal de Temescal*,

Plate 7: Charles Minturn with his Iron-hulled Ferryboat *Erastus Corning* in San Francisco Harbor, July 1852 . . . Posing on a fenced water-lot in front of his latest business acquisition is the sharp New England trader who joined with Horace Carpentier and Andrew J. Moon to monopolize the San Francisco-Oakland ferry business from 1852 until 1858. "Carpentier and Moon did not operate the ferry under their own names but entered into an agreement with Charles Minturn under which he performed all active duties of the concern" (Hinkel and McCann 1939:18). Minturn was already a wealthy riverboat captain when he decided to go into the lucrative ferryboat trade on San Francisco Bay. As owner of the famous *Senator* and *New World*, he had successfully skimmed the cream off the rich Gold Rush riverboat trade to the mines. In the same year as this view, he joined with Carpentier and Moon to organize the Contra Costa Steam Navigation Company, and a year later the Oakland trustees gave a 20-year contract to Carpentier to operate the ferry "in consideration of a certain percentage of the net profits to be paid by the navigation company to the town of Oakland." Armed with this convenient monopoly, Minturn and his partners immediately placed *Erastus Corning* and *Kate Hayes* in service. Later they added the *Clinton* (1853) and the *Contra Costa* (1857).

Typically, an opposition line came on the scene. The San Antonio Steam Navigation Line cut rates from Minturn's $20 a month for commuters to $5. Minturn had no choice but to meet the price, but he went to court to claim his exclusive rights to the Oakland run. The courts denied Minturn's claim, ruling that the Oakland trustees had no exclusive rights to give.

As the *Contra Costa* was making six trips a day, connecting with rail service to Oakland Point via Seventh Street and to Broadway, railroad officials recognized that they could make a profit from operating their own boats, so they launched the steamer *Louise* into service. The San Francisco and Alameda Railroad Company began operating rail and ferry service to Alameda, offering still more competition. Minturn decided to move his ferryboats to the San Francisco-Marin run.

(San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park)

comprising most of Oakland, in 1853 to a group of men: Richard P. Hammond, John B. Hays, John Caperton, and Lucien Hermann for $100,000. He had previously sold to John Clar, and others, in 1852 for $10,000 the property lying south of what was known as the Encinal Line. He retained 700 acres, about 2 miles on both sides of Telegraph Avenue. . . . Domingo sold all of Albany and Berkeley except for about 300 acres which he kept for his own use, for $82,000" (Fibel 1971:21).

THE POSSIBILITIES OF GROWTH: WEST OAKLAND IN 1870

Throughout the 19th century, the lithographic bird's-eye view was one of the most common ways that America's rapidly growing cities expressed their pride; in an often chaotic urban order, the bird's-eye view gave at least a visual sense of spatial civic unity. Sometimes, a convenient hill could afford a perspective for the artist, but the finest views were often purposefully drawn from a point of view unavailable to the human eye, depicting all of the details of a city to create a view seemingly natural, yet entirely the product of artifice. The production of such views was a time-consuming logistical enterprise because the artist had to reconstruct all of the details from ground-level observations.

Reproduced in Plate 8, the 1870 Snow & Roos view of the City of Oakland is an outstanding specimen of its type. The use of it as an historical source derives from the process that the artist must have used: a street-by-street survey of the town, noting at least the general type, if not the architectural details, of every structure. The time and expense of such a survey can be imagined; companies like Snow & Roos knew that their investment would pay off because so many businesses and well-to-do individuals would have enough civic pride to want to buy the finished view--indeed, it is probable that subscriptions were taken door-to-door as the survey of the city was carried out.

The fact that the perspective that the artist chose places West Oakland in the foreground is an indication of the importance of the railroad along Seventh Street and the selection, in the previous year, of Oakland as the transcontinental terminus. Instead of the wooded hinterland shown in the 1857 Coast Survey, West Oakland was now represented as the gateway to the city, with railroad lines running both along the axis of Seventh Street and along First Street, bypassing the settled areas and opening up previously inaccessible tidelands for eventual industrial use. In between the compact village of Oakland Point and the original street grid of downtown Oakland, the intervening land held a scattered development of houses, streets, and orchards, together with patches of the original woodlands still undisturbed. Many signs of rapid development can be found in the view: the beginnings of the Central Pacific yard are shown as a spur leaving the main line at the shore, and there can be discerned stacks of rails waiting to be laid; just to the right of this incipient yard, between Peralta, Third, Center, and Seventh streets, we can see the original woodland giving way to platted streets already lined with newly planted trees, enclosing empty blocks awaiting housebuilders.

West Oakland was a raw, new community in 1870, and much of the area that the Seventh Street railroad line passed through was still open land. The Snow & Roos view, while carefully showing the many orchards and gardens, depicted undeveloped land as either featureless fields,

open woodland, or dense woodland. Written accounts fill this gap. Describing the rapid process of development in 1867, the *Oakland Daily News* recounted a trip to Oakland Point:

> Recently having occasion to ride through this flourishing part of the city, we could but think of the very great and almost wonderful change which the mere presence of the railroad has wrought. Previous to its construction, nearly all that part of the encinal west of Adeline Street was a wilderness, there being scarcely a house or fence on the whole tract. The ground was generally covered with a thick growth of underbrush and tangled vines. Pleasure parties occasionally went there to gather blackberries, and few supposed that the land which then appeared to be almost worthless would ever attain to its present value. As soon, however, as the railroad was completed, and our citizens felt that they could rely upon the facilities which it afforded, there was a very great and marked increase of our population. Some of the tracts of land at the Point are as pleasant and inviting as any to be found in the city. These lots now became desirable as places of residences and their value was wonderfully increased. Today there are there a large number of elegant and comfortable houses. We presume that the average value of land there is about $2,000 per acre. We have not ascertained the exact population of that section of the city, but the number of children in attendance at the public school which they have established, is sixty. . . [February 14, 1867].

When this description of the progress of Oakland Point was made, the railroad was still the local San Francisco and Oakland Railway line along Seventh--not the transcontinental terminus. Middle-class suburbanites lived in the "elegant and comfortable houses," not railway workers.

The pattern of settlement that appears on the 1870 view shows much more than a mere random assemblage of structures. Each building was constructed with a view in mind both of the present and the future, and so the type and the relation of structures to one another and to the surrounding landscape reflected people's thinking about what West Oakland offered and what sort of place it would become, as well as social assumptions about what constituted a good or even an adequate way of life.

The hindsight of history imparts to the progression of events the illusion of inevitability; the growth of municipalities seems foreordained once they have become established cities. In reality, where urban areas would develop in California in the 19th century was a matter of competition between rival towns, many of which never satisfied the high expectations of those who invested in their future. Oakland gained some assurance of an urban future only after its selection as the transcontinental rail terminus, and even then it was possible up until the late 1870s that the railroad might locate many of its facilities elsewhere--on Yerba Buena Island, for example.

During the 1860s, much more so than in later years, the type of place that Oakland was and would become was not at all certain. Instead, different and potentially incompatible visions of the future found expression in the human landscape that the 1870 view depicts. Those who built substantial houses on large estates in West Oakland may have been expressing a desire for a

Plate 8: Snow & Roos Bird's-eye View of Oakland, 1870-1871 . . . This enlarged detail, encompassing the project area, depicts a reasonably accurate three-dimensional view of groves of trees and marshes; streets and railroads; and residential and commercial development. It is important because it locates specific sites of identifiable structures that were built in the 1860s, before the existence of Oakland city directories or Sanborn maps. This lithograph is the first and only detailed overall representation of the important period of development in West Oakland from 1860 up through 1871. *(Courtesy of the Bancroft Library)*

semi-rural suburban environment; the substantial investment that their homes entailed was not a mere real-estate speculation undertaken with the view of later subdivision, since some of their estates would remain intact for decades after the surrounding blocks had been filled with working-class houses: the McDermott estate at Seventh and Center survived intact from the 1860s until it was levelled for shipyard workers' housing during World War II. As the 1870 view shows, large houses were commonly placed among orchards in the center of an estate, and by 1870 there were more than a dozen such estates in West Oakland. Between Peralta Street and Market such estates predominated in 1870, giving the landscape a distinctive form, characterized by widely spaced and mostly large houses, set amidst extensive grounds and orchards. This type of suburban settlement was consonant with contemporary genteel conceptions of the home as a haven--a place of domestic seclusion that symbolized the successful enterprise of the male head of the household, while spatially separating his wife and children from the vicissitudes of commercial, urban life. In the 1860s, it was quite plausible for a man to spend the substantial sum of money it took to build such a West Oakland retreat in the belief that the area would become an elite suburb of San Francisco. This view of West Oakland is reflected in the 1867 description of Oakland Point, quoted above.

But others held different views in the 1860s of the future of West Oakland. The carefully planted future streets of the Bayview Tract between Peralta and Center south of Seventh form a potentially urban street grid, a setting for city row houses. The tract was clearly not the beginning of a country estate; it was a real-estate speculation. The land was seen by its owner not as a home site but as an investment--that is to say, something one sees from the standpoint of its maximum potential economic profit. For the speculative owner of undeveloped land in West Oakland in 1870, the transcontinental rail terminus, with all of the workers it would bring, meant money. The railway made the subdivision of land into highly profitable 25-foot house lots possible by providing strong local demand for housing that had not hitherto existed.

Farther west, at Oakland Point, an urban 19th-century landscape appears half-way complete in the 1870 view. Houses are long and narrow, fronting the street; many are built on the 25-foot wide lots that were a conventional urban spacing for dwellings in 19th-century American cities from New York to San Francisco. In between completed houses, blank walls abutted vacant lots, while already substantial two-story commercial and residential structures had appeared along Seventh Street between Bay and Wood streets, lending the conventional aspect of the main street of a small town.

The residents of Oakland Point in 1870 were largely those whose work depended, directly or indirectly, on the railroad. They lived there because it was convenient, because their work was there. And the incipiently urban setting of their dwellings paralleled the gradual growth of the railroad's facilities--some houses may have been initially constructed in the late 1860s as very small cottages providing purely utilitarian housing; as resources allowed, these cottages could be expanded into more capacious dwellings.

From the point of view of the individual householder in West Oakland, the smallness of his house was much less important than what it represented. It is likely that for many Oakland Point residents in 1870, their house and lot was the first property that they had owned; most working-class families in South of Market San Francisco from the 1860s through the 1900s rented rather than owned their homes (Olmsted et al. 1979). This pattern of buying a lot and erecting a small cottage, then expanding it later, characterized Oakland Point in the 1870s. As an 1878-79 Oakland city directory noted:

> Dwellings of more humble pretensions, mostly built for homes by the workingmen of the city, are by far the most numerous of all. . . . It may be stated, however, that many of these consist of only a beginning of a house or rear part, as hundreds who have purchased lots for homestead purposes are not at once able to build a house complete, but are anxious to secure the use of their lot and to save rents. All this indicates thrift and a permanent accession of the bone and sinew of the country in the most desirable shape--that of property owners [1879:6].

None of the buildings on the 1857 Coast Survey Map appears in the 1870 bird's-eye view; almost all of the structures shown within the project area on the 1870 view were built after the completion in 1863 of the San Francisco and Oakland Railroad. We can occasionally learn the dates of construction of the structures shown on the 1870 view within the project area using descriptions and reminiscences of West Oakland in the 1860s. More generally, the pattern of development at Oakland Point suggests a strong likelihood that any buildings that appear on the 1870 view were built after 1863. For example, the first grocery store in West Oakland was opened in 1864.

The conventions of an urban infrastructure lagged behind the expansion of the town. An expression of the unsettled half-suburban, half-country condition of West Oakland in 1870 is found in the way people acted within its spaces, using informal footpaths to get where they were going. The lack of orderly pedestrian traffic in West Oakland impinged on the Victorian civic sensibilities of those who, like Mayor Williams, thought that pedestrians should have their journeys ordered more systematically:

> The first noticeable feature that strikes the eye of a stranger when visiting our city is the crowd of straggling pedestrians as they diverge from the different stations along the route of the railroad, and wend their way hither and thither, some through weeds and sand where sidewalks ought to be; others, less brave, seek the middle of the streets, much to the annoyance and inconvenience of the travel of carriages and carts, as well as to the risk of life and limb [quoted in Wood 1883:572].

The completion of the street grid was the first step in ordering the open landscape into a city. A line drawn 300 feet west of West Street marked the edge of the original Kellersberger survey of 1853; with its uniform blocks and evenly spaced public squares, it was a generic 19th-century

American town plan. The practical advantages of such a grid-iron plat involved the ease with which it could be surveyed (a not unimportant consideration in 1853) and its guarantee of uniform, repetitive spatial referents that served to minimize boundary disputes. The plat underscored the break with the rancho period--the Peraltas had not thought in terms of precise boundaries because they knew they owned the land; Carpentier, his associates, and the settlers who followed needed such a surveyed grid to define their sense of ownership. More than just a useful tool, the street grid was a potent symbol.

Throughout the 1850s and into the 1860s, there were debates over the issue of how best to plat streets in West Oakland. The land was divided into tracts by property lines that bore no relation to the Kellersberger grid, as can be seen on the 1857 Coast Survey Map. Whether the new streets should conform to those lines, or whether they should cut through parcels, creating irregularly shaped lots, was a contentious matter. Many property owners favored the expedient of putting in streets to suit their purely private interests; some of the influential original promoters of Oakland struggled fiercely against this idea. Some had a sense of higher principles at stake. Thus Horace Carpentier, attempting to convince skeptics of the great advantages of absolutely uniform blocks, tried to express what the perfect street grid meant, while also marshalling every purely practical argument he could muster:

> In the opening of new streets, as from time to time this may become necessary, to meet the wants of our rapidly increasing population, it will, I think be best to follow the plans of the old ones, both as to the width and direction, so that the city may not lose in this respect her invaluable characteristics of regularity and beauty . . . . Acute and obtuse angles in a city are opposed alike to beauty and convenience . . . a serious objection to crooking the streets in the manner proposed is that the winds which prevail in this latitude nearly the whole year would sweep up directly through them without any check or obstacle, whereas, if the streets be continued straight in conformity to the present plan, the winds, striking them obliquely, will be broken up and arrested by the buildings [quoted in Wood 1883:562-563].

That Carpentier's ingenious arguments had only a partial effect can be seen on the 1870 bird's-eye view: the major east-west streets do indeed connect with their counterparts in the Kellersberger street grid, but at a slight angle of the type that Carpentier especially abhorred; the western blocks are regular, but not entirely uniform; Peralta Street runs at an oblique angle that corresponds to one of the survey lines shown on the 1857 Coast Survey Map. Significantly, no land was set aside for public squares. As a result, the arrangement of West Oakland's streets came to express an urban character, but without a larger urban spatial unity.

The streets that are shown as open on the 1870 view are depicted conventionally, but in fact their conditions varied substantially. Eighth Street was the first to be surveyed in West Oakland in 1854, but in 1860 neither Seventh nor Eighth Street had been extended to the bay, though the Mayor suggested in his address to the public that year that Oakland would benefit greatly if one

or the other should (Wood 1883:566). Not until 1862 were names given to the new east-west streets between Market and the wire fence that marked the future line of Center Street. As late as September of 1867, Mayor Crane was attempting to secure support and funds to open at least one street north of First all the way west to Oakland Point (Wood 1883:569). That same year, the *Oakland News* recounted the reasons for settling on street routes and investing in improvements in West Oakland; the fact that the need was pressing and the arguments were a decade old is an indication of the difficulties in getting property owners to agree on where streets should go and how to pay for their improvement:

> Unfortunately the means of communication between the Point and the central part of the city is very poor. There is only one road leading there, and that is narrow, crooked, and sandy. Some of the property owners there consider that the plan on which the eastern part of the city is laid out should there be adopted. Their streets should be a continuation of the streets in this part of the city. There can be but little doubt that the whole of our peninsula will, at some future day, be thickly settled. When a large number of houses have been erected, the cost of laying out and grading streets will be infinitely greater. Before other buildings are erected there, the present residents should agree among themselves upon some plan for opening streets upon their land. It will increase in value as it becomes accessible and it is almost as necessary that there should be a ready means of communication between the Point and Broadway, as between the Point and San Francisco [February 14, 1867].

In 1870 Mayor Spaulding confessed that "it was not known to the City Council at that time what condition the surveys were in, in the western part of the city, but more particularly that part lying west of Adeline Street. Recent investigation has discovered the fact that errors and inaccuracies exist to such an extent that only a thorough resurvey could resolve the confusion" (Wood 1883:571).

The well-defined streets shown on the 1870 view must be taken with a grain of salt; the view shows streets that were legally open at the time with their surveyed bounds. The actual streets were mostly country lanes; none was macadamized except for Adeline, and all would have been dusty in the long summers, and muddy after winter rains. Between Adeline and the village at Oakland Point, only Seventh and Eighth could really be considered to be useful through roads. Many of the others may have been no more than lines of surveyors stakes marking out scrubland that had been formally accepted by the city.

In people's day-to-day lives, the village at Oakland Point in the 1870s functioned as a small town spatially and economically removed from central Oakland. It was not in any real sense a suburban appendage of Oakland, in the way that Brooklyn Township to the east was a suburb: there is no documentation of people commuting to work in Oakland from the Point on the railway. For a considerable time, no fare was collected from purely local passengers along Seventh Street, so slight was the traffic. And in reaching San Francisco on the railway and the ferries, the many commuters from Oakland did indeed pass through the Point settlement, but the

station to board the ferries was at the end of a pier more than a mile long. Oakland Point was not a stopover junction for travellers in 1870, nor did it become so in later years, except for an interval in the 1870s when Berkeley passengers changed trains at Cedar Street. People who lived at the Point in 1870 had to do much of their trade in Oakland or San Francisco, at some inconvenience--it was only in the early 20th century that the trains ran every 20 minutes along Seventh Street. They lived there because they worked there--and many, if not most, worked for the railroad.

THE TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILWAY REACHES OAKLAND

The Historical Context of Railway Development

The transcontinental railway was not projected as a commercial undertaking; instead, it was conceived as a national policy of prime importance during the Civil War, with the goal of linking an uncommitted California to the Union. Earlier efforts to obtain federal subsidies for a transcontinental line had been stymied by sectional differences: congressmen from the southern states naturally favored a route west from the mouth of the Mississippi, which would facilitate the extension of slavery; northern politicians, for equally political reasons, insisted on a route north of the Mason-Dixon line. The debate went to the heart of the great political dispute of the time, and it did so with special urgency because railroads were the technological vanguard of the age; railroads were seen as potent symbols of progress, not just as a convenient way to get from here to there. The Civil War gave the project a new impetus, and as J.S. Hittell noted, "the enormous expenditure on the army and navy made the proposed bond subsidy of $50,000,000 look like a trifle" (1882:164). An Act of Congress, passed in 1862, granted the subsidy and defined the route. Construction of the transcontinental railway was to begin simultaneously from the bluffs of the Missouri in the east, and from the major head of riparian navigation at Sacramento in the west.

The choice of a western terminus was a logical one. Beginning with the Gold Rush in 1849, riverboat service between San Francisco and Sacramento had become the major transportation artery within the state. Riverboats were cheap to operate and required little capital to purchase or construct; the pleasant trip from San Francisco to Sacramento could be made in less than a day. By contrast, a stage journey from San Francisco to San Jose also took a day, by the end of which the dusty passengers were unlikely to be anxious to repeat the experience. For the settlement pattern in California in the 1850s, the rivers were so convenient that there was no urgent need for railroads, as J.S. Hittell pointed out:

> For their local business within the limits of their own State, the Californians had in 1854 no urgent need of the locomotive. The bays and rivers tributary to the Golden Gate were well adapted to accommodate an extensive traffic by steamboat and schooner. No route by rail from San Francisco to Stockton, Sacramento, and Marysville, the river ports which took nine tenths of the freight, could be so short or cheap as that by water. The merchandise was carried to 50 important mining camps by roads radiating out from each of these ports, like the ribs of a fan, each road following up a canyon or narrow ridge of the Sierra Nevada [1882:162].

The importance of the river link was underscored by the fact that the gold mines in the Sierra were still, in the 1860s, the major export industry of the state. As speculative townsites

were laid out in northern California in the 1850s, their location in relation to this river axis was often of prime importance. Benicia was briefly selected to be the state capitol precisely because it was located at a natural junction between the bay and the river delta, midway between the two largest cities in the state, and afforded excellent deep-water anchorage for ocean-going vessels. By contrast, the site of Oakland lay outside of the quickly emerging riparian transportation network, and the shallow water over the bar at the mouth of San Antonio Creek made any water access difficult. Just getting to Oakland required a lengthy trip down San Antonio Creek that could only be conveniently undertaken at high tide; to the east, the range of hills provided an effective barrier to efforts to develop overland connections to the Central Valley.

Oakland was not, therefore, an obvious good choice for the transcontinental railway terminus. If anything, Oakland was less convenient to get to by water than Sacramento; it had only a small population and no industries of note. As late as the mid-1860s, the whole of the *contra costa* remained largely pastureland, with widely scattered farmsteads; the most productive farms were located far south of Oakland, in the rich bottom-lands at Hayward and the mouth of Niles Canyon.

Ferries and Trains to Oakland Point

The slow growth of Oakland through the 1850s and 1860s reflected the relationship between geography and contemporary transportation technology. There were logging operations in the East Bay hills in the 1850s, and these continued until the redwood groves were gone; there was dairying and some truck farming. An infrequent and undependable ferry service reached San Francisco from the landing at the foot of Broadway. Those who chose to settle in the nascent town of Oakland looked to its future in different ways--after all, California in the 1860s was mostly still empty space, with the bulk of the population concentrated in a few areas. The future was a broad field of possibilities for anyone to imagine or to gamble on.

Promoters of Oakland made a virtue of its isolation from San Francisco by thinking of it in moral, rather than geographical, terms. Oakland was to grow into a city where property owners could realize Victorian ideals of domesticity, in a salutary moral isolation from the blatant sinfulness of San Francisco. A man could raise a family on a comfortable estate in Oakland with the knowledge that his wife would not be shocked on a daily basis by scenes of drunkenness and lechery all too common in parts of San Francisco, and that his children might enjoy a healthful, moral environment. Oakland was a town of churches and country lanes, with a militantly middle-class character that it long retained. Wealthy San Franciscans in society circles did not make it their home; if they desired a suburban retreat, Alameda quickly became their preferred locale in the East Bay.

The attractions of suburban middle class life in Oakland had to be weighed against the inconvenience of a lengthy trip across the bay to do business in San Francisco. As a result, the

growth of Oakland was, by California standards of the time, slow throughout the 1850s and 1860s. The population of the town was just 1,543 in 1860, as compared to San Francisco's 56,802. If major property owners were to make money on the scale they desired by developing their land, they first would have to overcome the formidable problem of inadequate transportation. Mayor Williams noted in 1857:

> The want of suitable and proper accommodations for passage between this city and San Francisco has produced great discomfort to passengers and worked a serious injury to the prosperity of this city. The high charges for freight and passage; the want of comfortable accommodations; the uncertainty of time for trip; the length of time to effect a crossing of eight miles--generally one hour--the daily apprehension of remaining grounded on the bar for hours, have deterred hundreds from settling here, who, doing business in San Francisco, would otherwise, with their families, have been domiciled with us [quoted in Wood 1883:544].

One solution was to dredge the bar that blocked the free navigation of San Antonio Estuary, but this would be prohibitively expensive--no one knew how much it would cost or whether the channel would remain silt-free. Equally important, dredging the bar could offer no direct profit to investors, since anyone could take advantage of such navigation improvements. More established cities might use public funds; Oakland lacked the necessary tax base. Even if money had been available, the legal status of the waterfront continued to be clouded by Horace Carpentier's claims to its exclusive possession. From Oakland Point, on the other hand, access to the bay could be obtained without first traversing the mudflats that lined most of the estuary to the east. A pier at the point would offer the cheapest immediate solution to Oakland's transportation problem by bypassing the estuary altogether. Accordingly, in 1855 the City of Oakland advertised for proposals to construct a wharf west from Bay Street: "The jetty to be not less than eight hundred and fifty yards long, with a 'T' at the end one hundred feet in length and fifty feet broad" (Wood 1883:500). Rodmond Gibbons won the contract for the pier, and construction began in a desultory way in the fall of 1855; it would never be completed, and in the following years would acquire the nickname "Gibbons' Folly."

The natural complement to a pier at Oakland Point would be a railroad connecting the Point to downtown Oakland, increasing the value of all the land in West Oakland in the process. The first attempt to build such a railroad came in July of 1857, when a line running from Lake Merritt to Oakland Point along Seventh Street received the sanction of the local authorities; Mayor Williams predicted that such a line would lead to a great increase in Oakland's population (Hinckle and McCann 1939:38). Raising the capital necessary for its construction, however, remained an obstacle. Even the wharf at the end of Seventh Street, undertaken in 1855, failed to reach its planned length through lack of funds, forcing the City Council to extend periodically the date required for its completion.

A new set of railroad promoters, including Rodmond Gibbons, William Hillegass, R.E. Cole, Samuel Wood, Joseph Black, and George Goss, obtained a franchise from the state legislature on May 20, 1861, for "the right to construct and maintain a railroad through certain streets in the city of Oakland" (Baker 1914:75). As in the 1857 scheme, the alignment of Seventh Street was chosen as the route for the projected San Francisco and Oakland Railroad, since it ended at Oakland Point where Gibbons had been building his pier since the mid-1850s. Seventh Street, or Railroad Avenue as it was now frequently called, also ran near property that several of these men owned--Wood and Goss would both have streets named after themselves in West Oakland, and Gibbons owned potentially valuable property at the point, as well as a large tract traversed by Seventh Street farther east.

The investment in any new railway at the time was substantial, and the promoters kept right-of-way acquisition costs to a minimum by running the line through the street; the major expenses were the rails themselves, which had to be imported by ship from the East, and the construction of a longer wharf at Oakland Point capable of bearing the weight of trains. The new wharf was built just south of Gibbons' existing pier, and was three quarters of a mile long, which would allow ferries to dock without regard for the tide (Hinckle and McCann 1939 [2]:39). Actual construction began in 1862: "There was a great hurrah in Oakland when, on the second day of August, it became known that work had commenced on the ferry railroad. The first cause of rejoicing was the arrival of piles for the construction of the wharf. Real estate immediately advanced fifty per cent" (Halley 1876:160). Completion of the pier and the railroad proceeded quickly; it was designed to carry light-weight local traffic and was doubtless built as cheaply as possible. Within thirteen months the new line was ready to begin operations:

> The first trip made by the cars on the Oakland and San Francisco Ferry Railroad was made on the 2d day of September, 1863. At that date the road was completed from the end of the wharf to Broadway, a length of about four miles. Thereafter the trains made regular trips in connection with the steamer *Contra Costa*. The wharf at that time was only about 3/4s of a mile long, sufficient to clear the bar. The first three cars used by the company were built at Oakland Point, by a Mr. Young, and the engine also at the same place, by C.W. Stevens, now of San Francisco [Halley 1876:177].

By 1865 the line had been extended to the township of Brooklyn in what is now East Oakland, but it remained a strictly local railroad because its promoters were fundamentally interested in increasing the value of the land they owned, especially in West Oakland. For its owners, the railroad was a means to that end, not the beginning of a more extensive railroad system. Fares were not low, and were geared towards commuters, with the fare for a single trip set at 50 cents, and monthly tickets five dollars (Halley 1876:177). Considering that many working men only earned two dollars a day, taking the ferry to San Francisco and back involved a substantial sum of money. But despite its limitations, the railroad brought about a fundamental spatial reorientation of Oakland that ensured that it would in time become the economic center

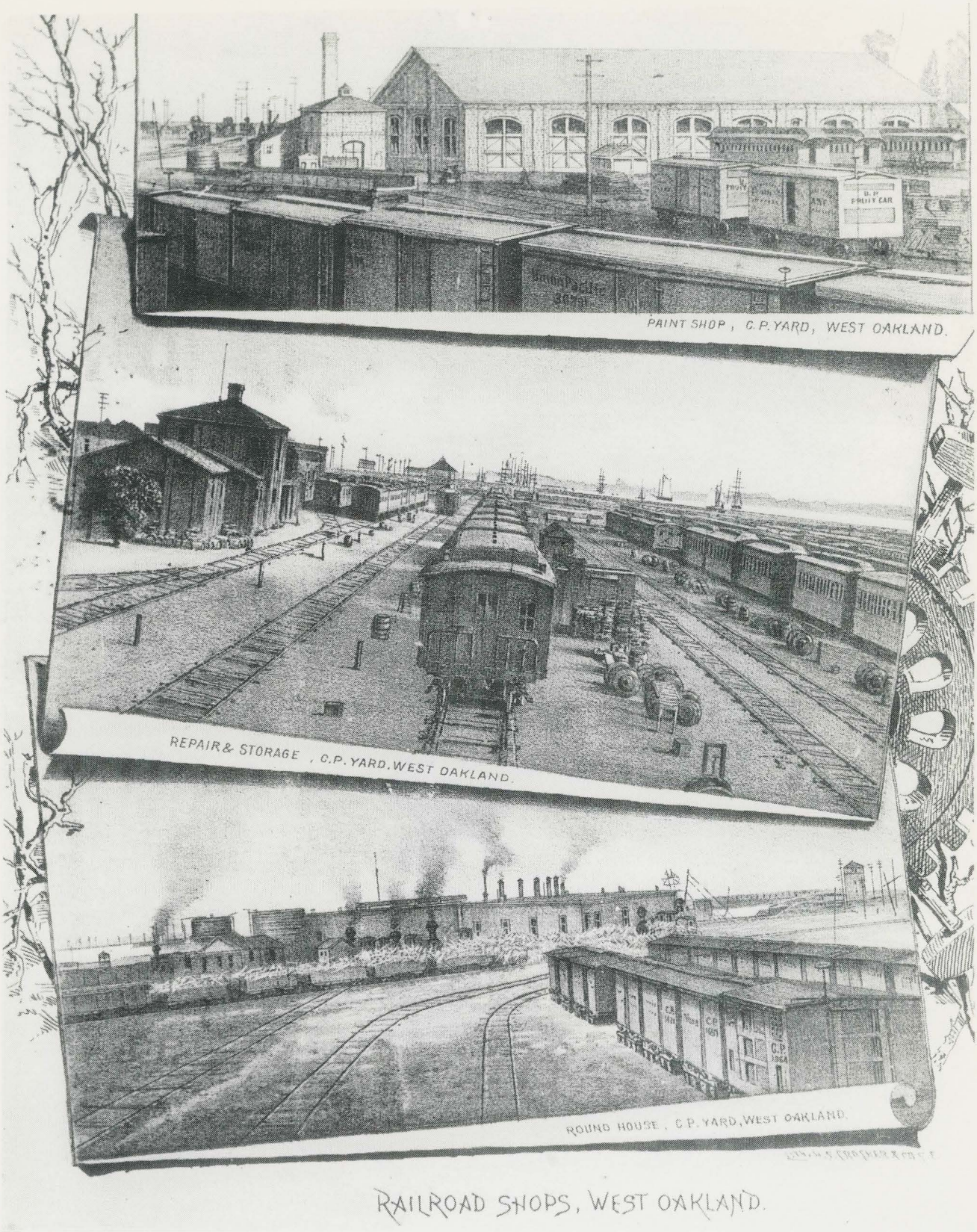


Plate 9: The Central Pacific Railroad West Oakland Yards in the 1870s . . . Already, the yards formed a substantial complex of solidly constructed buildings in a town where there was little other industry. The paint shop, at top, a busy place in an era when the wooden coaches were kept highly polished as a matter of pride, was still standing in 1993, in use as a diesel locomotive shed. Note the fruit car in the right foreground--a novelty that would soon become the hallmark of California's exports to less favored sections of the nation. The large building in the middle view was also standing in 1993, but the roundhouse was long gone. The odd material in the gondola cars in front of the roundhouse is baleen--ripped from the mouths of whales off the coast of Alaska for ladies' corsets. ***(Courtesy of the Bancroft Library)***

of the East Bay. Before the construction of the railroad, Oakland had been a small town clustering in the blocks along Broadway and looking out onto the backwater of San Antonio Creek. The railroad, and especially its ferry connection to San Francisco, made Seventh Street the new transportation axis. Broadway would remain Oakland's main business street, but Oakland Point was now the major gateway to the East Bay.

Oakland as the Transcontinental Terminus

Although it had made sense to begin building the transcontinental railway east from Sacramento, as its completion grew imminent the advantages of a rail link to San Francisco had become evident. Huntington, Stanford, Hopkins, and Crocker had made their fortunes through government construction subsidies and land grants; the actual operation of the transcontinental railway was less certainly profitable, since high costs meant that most freight would continue to reach California by sea. The transcontinental line was a great national symbol but generated little local traffic; to reach its potential, it needed feeder routes in California. Collis Huntington realized that even greater profits lay in obtaining additional federal land grants by building new lines within California--lines that would generate local traffic at a low operating cost. Huntington's unstated goal was a virtual transportation monopoly in the state. This he largely achieved between 1870 and his death in 1902.

The San Francisco-Sacramento route was the first step towards such a monopoly. The existing railroad from San Francisco south to San Jose was acquired by Huntington and his partners, and new track was to be built from there through Niles Canyon to the Central Valley, skirting the eastern margins of the Sacramento Delta. This new line was to be called the Western Pacific; its construction had begun in 1865 and though the road was originally planned to be independent of the Central Pacific, "it became rumored about this time [spring 1867] that the W.P R.R. Co. had sold out their road and franchise to Leland Stanford and the Central Pacific Railroad Company, which proved subsequently to have been well-founded" (Halley 1876:227). The Western Pacific, together with another rail link between Alameda and Niles that the Central Pacific also acquired, was completed in 1869, at the same time that the transcontinental rails met in Utah. But between 1867 and 1869 a crucial decision had been made: Oakland Point, rather than San Francisco, was chosen for the actual transcontinental terminal.

Huntington and his partners' choice of Oakland Point over San Francisco as the transcontinental terminal decisively influenced the whole course of the urbanization of the East Bay and made it possible for Oakland to grow into a city. For much of West Oakland, the railroad terminus came to dominate economic life, creating new social patterns and bringing into being a new community. The choice of Oakland as a terminus was not a decision made with any public consultation. The Point became the terminus through a series of strictly private business deals, and as Scott notes, "San Franciscans were bitterly disappointed" (1959:48).

> On March 31, 1868, Horace Carpentier, still sole possessor of the Oakland waterfront, deeded to a four-day-old corporation known as the Oakland Waterfront Company almost the entire Oakland waterfront. The next day this company deeded five hundred acres to the Western Pacific Railroad, an affiliate of the Central Pacific, to be used for a terminal for the transcontinental line, with the stipulation that the railroad might select the land it wanted. In addition, the Oakland Water-front Company ceded to the railroad two strips of land, each not more than a hundred feet wide, for a right of way. In return for these grants, the Western Pacific agreed to complete its railroad from Niles into Oakland and to spend not less than $500,000 on terminal facilities within the next three years.
>
> These swift developments climaxed a series of discussions that Carpentier had initiated with Leland Stanford. The Oakland Waterfront Company was Carpentier's device for associating himself with the builders of the Central Pacific and benefiting by the potentially most profitable railroad venture in the West [Scott 1959:48].

The public reaction in Oakland to what would later seem a high-handed private deal, was one of tremendous enthusiasm, at least among those who had already begun imagining the future wealth that the railroad would certainly bring them. In 1870 the *Oakland News* described the reaction of Oakland property owners:

> Every man who owned a twenty-five foot lot was ready to hug and kiss his neighbor, in view of the *glorious* prospects in store for Oakland. Rejoicing was observed on every hand; old animosities were forgotten, and even the sins of Carpentier were, by the action and voice of the people, absolved unconditionally, and the 'monster whose blighting influence had retarded our prosperity' for years and years previously was reinstated in the good opinions of the community for his efforts to secure the terminus.
>
> Property doubled in value and men who had been for years impoverishing themselves in paying taxes on unproductive lands, suddenly found themselves transformed into millionaires. And this transformation of values was mainly effected by the prospect of having the railroad terminus located here [quoted in Wood 1883:532].

The Central Pacific acquired the Oakland and San Francisco Railroad in 1869 to provide the last link in the network of local roads the Big Four had assembled, taking over operation of the Seventh Street local trains. The land that the Central Pacific acquired for its shops and yards was located south of Seventh Street, and a freight bypass was begun to avoid residential areas. A franchise for such a line had already been obtained from the City of Oakland in 1868. The franchise specified Fifth Street as the route, but Leland Stanford visited West Oakland and decided that it would be better to route the bypass along the alignment of Third Street. Still further consideration moved the line south to First Street, until it reached the property the railroad had acquired for its yards west of Peralta, where it angled northwards to meet the pier at Seventh Street. Once this route was settled to the railroad's satisfaction, construction of the last link between the Niles Canyon line and Oakland was quickly accomplished. "The last rail

of the Pacific Railroad was laid on the 29th of October [1869] in Oakland, and the first locomotive of the line entered that city at five minutes after 10 A.M. of that day. . . . On the 8th of November . . . the first through overland train arrived in Oakland at five minutes past four o'clock. It stopped at the Broadway station for a moment and then passed down to the wharf, at a high rate of speed, amid general rejoicing" (Halley 1876:281).

As can be seen on Plate 8, the 1870 bird's-eye view, the completed First Street route ran almost entirely through undeveloped land, which is undoubtedly a principal reason why it was selected. Between Linden and Cypress streets, the line also crossed the channels and marshlands that extended as far as project Blocks 7 and 8, including a major tidal slough at First between Poplar and Kirkham. The 1870 view shows these channels abruptly cut off by the railway, which in turn is shown on solid ground rather than trestlework. Only a single spur track is shown on the view for the storage of engines and cars, but a much larger complex of yards and shops would soon be constructed.

Complementing the construction of the new main line along First Street, the building of pier improvements at the end of Seventh Street at Oakland Point also began in 1868 and 1869. The new pier occupied tidelands extending west of Seventh Street that Carpentier had granted to the railroad. Thus, the new mainline angled north from First Street at Peralta, joining the existing Seventh Street pier offshore. How far the new pier should extend was a matter of controversy. When the pier came into the possession of Stanford and his partners, it was already 6,900 feet long (Baker 1914:76). In 1869 the pier was extended with additional tracks on its northern side still farther out into the bay, to water sufficiently deep for ocean-going vessels to dock, so that freight could be trans-shipped directly to trains, bypassing San Francisco altogether, as shown in Plates 10 and 11. It has not been possible to identify a sequence of precise dates and plans for these early phases in the construction of the pier, and this may well be because construction and maintenance were ongoing projects, with additions being constructed from time to time as increasing traffic warranted. The major project of building a pier to deep water was substantially complete by January of 1871. On April 16th of that year, the railroad put into service its first freight ferry boat, capable of carrying 18 loaded rail cars to the railroad's San Francisco ferry slip at the foot of King Street, and built on the waterfront to the south of the new Oakland pier (Baker 1914:78). The new pier was called the Oakland Long Wharf, and ran 11,000 feet out into the bay. For many years it carried most of the cargo moving in and out of Oakland (Scott 1959:62).

The railroad's pier is of considerable historical importance; it made Oakland a significant port, and it served as the nucleus and stimulant for subsequent industrial development. For the Oakland Point neighborhood, the pier was a focus of employment, a gateway to San Francisco, and a place to go fishing. The pier was a substantial investment in itself, but even before it was completed there were attempts at a much more ambitious scheme to extend the wharf to Yerba Buena Island in the middle of the bay:

> Two important acts affecting Oakland's railroad history were passed by the State legislature. By these acts the Central Pacific was granted 150 acres of a submerged area in the Bay, north of Yerba Buena Island, with a 200 foot right of way to the shore of the mainland. Within this territory the company was to establish its terminal depot. Far from limiting themselves to terminal projects, the railroad interests revealed other ambitious plans, such as bridging Carquinez Straits and the space between the Oakland shore and Yerba Buena Island [Hinckle and McCann 1939 (2):40].

The idea of a viaduct and bridge to Yerba Buena Island had first been mooted by the owners of the San Francisco and Oakland Railroad. The builders of the Central Pacific began to seriously consider the idea in the mid-1860s; the technical experience gained in pushing the railroad through the mountains and deserts made it possible to realistically consider the prospect of bay crossing.

> Among the many railroad enterprises afloat at this time was one for the construction of a road from Oakland to Goat Island. A profile of the proposed road was filed in the Recorder's Office on the 22d of January [1866], certified by Chas. Main, President, Periguine Fitzhugh, Secretary; and L.H. Short, Chief Engineer. The route was in a direct line from the outer end of the San Francisco and Oakland Railroad Companies' Wharf to the Island. The distance over which the road was to be constructed was nearly two miles, and the greatest depth of water to be passed over was about sixty feet. Such a road would give railroad communication to within 1 5/8 miles of San Francisco. Goat Island was looked upon, by railroad engineers, as the terminal point of the transcontinental railroad, and as early as 1863, T.D. Judah, the original projector of the Central Pacific Railroad, put his finger on this spot in the map and said to an Oakland engineer, "there is the point to which we will ultimately have to go." All efforts, however, to place Goat Island in the possession of a railroad company have been defeated in Congress, that island being United States property [Halley 1876:208].

The project was temporarily abandoned because the federal government refused to relinquish ownership of the island. The Central Pacific attempted to get around this obstacle by having a compliant state government grant it the tidelands that lay to the north of the island; at the same time, the railroad interests hoped to convince Congress to allow the use of at least a part of Yerba Buena Island. Residents of both San Francisco and Oakland took the proposed crossing very seriously. Scott notes that, in 1870,

> San Franciscans became aware that there was still danger that Congress might enact a pending bill granting Yerba Buena Island to the Big Four for a terminal. The prospect of having transcontinental and San Joaquin Valley trains loading and unloading at docks on Yerba Buena Island, within sight of the waning port of San Francisco, was too much for citizens who were concerned about the shipping interests of the metropolis. Opposition to the proposal became vociferous; and the demand was renewed that San Francisco be made the western terminus of the transcontinental railroad. But the Big Four did not appear to be making a strenuous effort to secure

Plate 10: Oakland Long Wharf in 1878 . . . By 1871 Oakland Long Wharf extended more than two miles into the bay; ships could meet the transcontinental trains of the Central Pacific bringing passengers and freight into Oakland. In this woodcut, deep-water square riggers discharge cargo into gondola cars, as a crowd of Chinese laborers--possibly a railroad work gang--waits for transportation. (*Frank Leslie's Illustrated Magazine,* May 11, 1878)

Plate 11: Oakland Long Wharf about 1905 . . . After 1882 Long Wharf was used for freight traffic only--passengers now used the more capacious Oakland Mole. The big business of ocean-going freight was efficiently handled by the combination of rail freight cars rolling right alongside deep-water and coastwise vessels coming in to discharge or take on cargo. The two four-masted British steel ships in the center are loading cargo, probably for the Cape Horn trade. Thousands of board feet of lumber stacked on the pier have been left by steam schooners, in from the northwest, carrying rough-cut timber. Seven men fill the waiting rail car by hand--a slow process, but far safer and less difficult than loading that same lumber onto the heaving deck of a schooner riding out swells in a "doghole port" off Mendocino's rocky coast. *(San Francisco Maritime Historic Park)*

> passage of the pending bill. They were about to complete their famous Long Wharf at Oakland, extending two miles into the bay. The public outcry against the Yerba Buena Island proposal subsided temporarily [1959:59].

The extension of Long Wharf to Yerba Buena Island was finally laid to rest with a Board of United States Engineer's study in 1873 that reported that the cost of reaching the island would be twice the cost of dredging San Antonio Estuary to accommodate deep-water shipping (Halley 1876:348).

The growth of traffic to Oakland Point required railway as well as pier expansions almost as soon as the transcontinental line was complete. "In 1873 an addition of 3.79 miles to the Oakland and Alameda branch, consisting of a second track through Railroad Avenue and Seventh Street, Oakland, from Bay Street to Harrison Street, and a branch thence to Mastick Station, Alameda, was built" (Baker 1914:78). At the same time, shop facilities were being steadily expanded with substantial brick buildings, with major construction taking place in 1873 and 1874, and a large roundhouse was built near the bay shore off of the First Street line. During 1874 the railroad opened a shipyard at Oakland Point south of the Long Wharf for building ferries; the two new ferries that entered service in 1875 were built there (Plate 14).

This phase of the rapid expansion of railroad facilities in West Oakland continued throughout the 1870s, reaching its culmination with the construction of the massive Oakland Mole, immediately south of Long Wharf, in 1879-1882, shown in Plates 12 and 13. Although it had been constructed to carry anticipated traffic for many years, Long Wharf was already proving to be inadequate by the mid-1870s, mainly because of the increase in commuter traffic along the Seventh Street line. The new Oakland Mole was built as a passenger terminal only, and would continue to be the main Oakland depot until ferry service ended in the late 1950s:

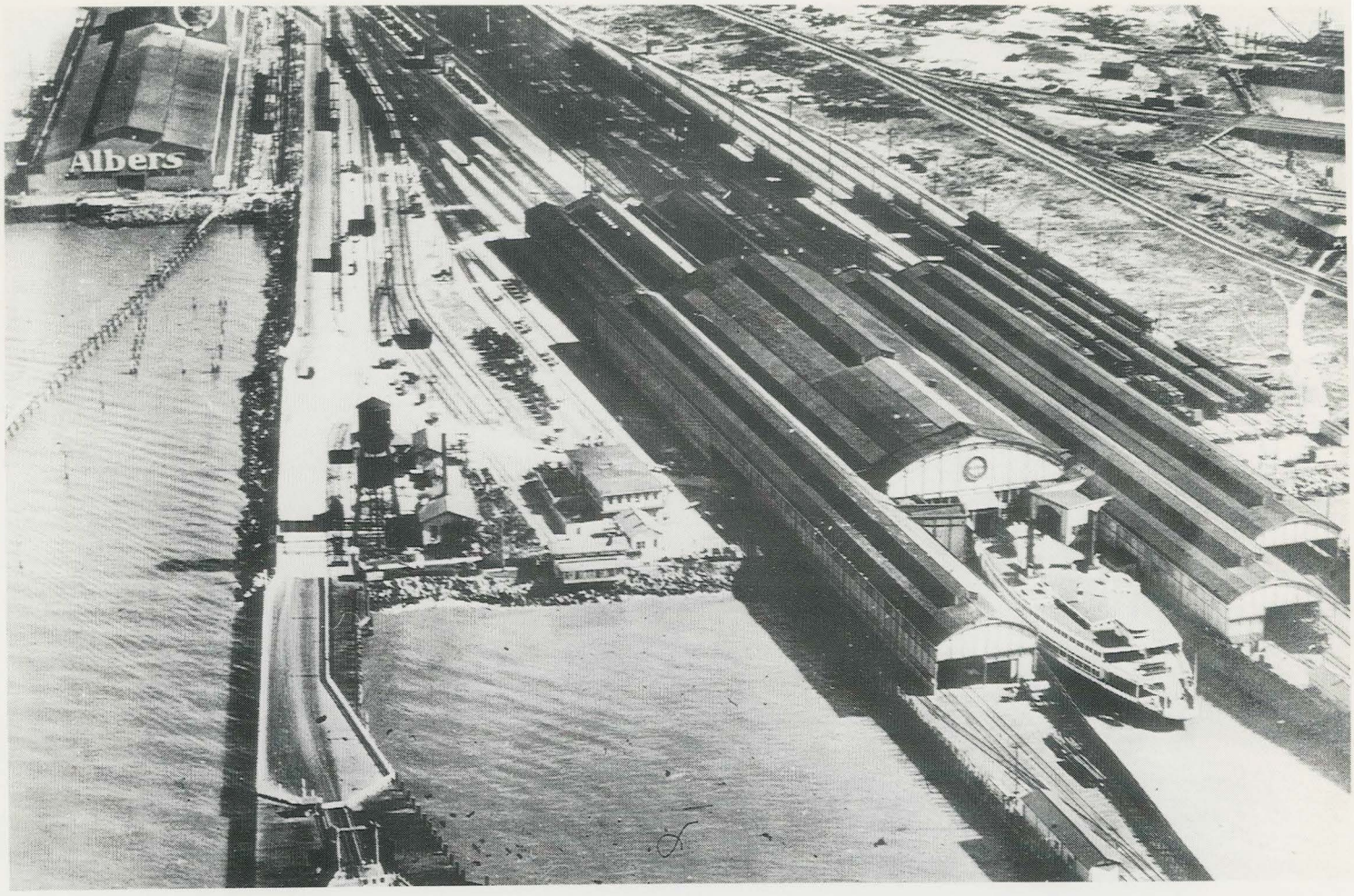
> The main part of the pier was constructed as a rock-fill mole that was wide enough for four tracks plus a wagon road along its north side. At the western end there was built an enormous train shed, which spanned a total of 14 tracks intended for use by transcontinental and mainline passenger trains as well as the local steam trains. South of this Victorian-style building was a coach yard of sufficient capacity to accommodate as many cars as might be needed during peak periods. Inside the cavernous train shed were offices, a large waiting room, and the multitude of other facilities that go with a busy train terminal.
>
> Construction of the rock-fill mole got underway early in 1880, with a steady stream of rock trains bringing fill on a nearly around-the-clock schedule. By the following year, the fill had been completed and erection of the buildings had begun. The entire facility was completed early in January 1882 [Ford 1977:66].

Employment on the railroad grew with these developments, and a large proportion of the workers lived in West Oakland, especially in the Oakland Point neighborhood. The railroad employees included those involved directly with the operation of trains and ferries, with even

larger numbers of shop and boatyard workers. The main complex of shops was built in 1874 primarily to service engines and cars at the end of the transcontinental line, with an attached boatyard for building and repairing ferries. The economics of scale, however, led the railroad to centralize much of its system-wide construction activities in West Oakland. The Pacific Improvement Company was formed solely to handle construction of facilities for the railroad. As the railroad expanded to the north and south, the position of the West Oakland shops, with their ready access to deep-water shipping on the Long Wharf, led the railroad to concentrate more and more work at West Oakland. By the 1890s, the Pacific Improvement Company was one of the major West Oakland industries, as the 1896 *Illustrated Album of Alameda County* describes:

> The headquarters of the constructive operations of the Southern Pacific Company's system are at the West Oakland yards. . . . The bridge and building department does all the building for the railroad and for the Pacific Improvement Company, a branch of the Southern Pacific, with the single exception of the laying of the rails. It primarily is designed to build all the bridges which the track and engineer departments require. The latter department supplies the superintendent with a profile of the space to be bridged and the data necessarily connected therewith. From this the designs are drawn and the parts of the bridge made and fitted in these yards. The bridge is built in place by a gang from this department, and when finished and turned over to the track department is ready to receive the rails.
>
> The territory extends all over the Pacific Coast to the most distant points reached by the Southern Pacific Company's lines, whether owned or leased. To the south it reaches El Paso, to the east Ogden, and towards the north it runs into Oregon. Over this territory it supplies, with the exception of ties, every bit of lumber that is used by the several departments of the road, even providing the car department at Sacramento with all its material. . . . The department is even furnished farther reaching in its scope, for it does the work of construction for the Pacific Improvement Company. The new Del Monte Hotel, at Monterey, Hotel El Carmelo, at Pacific Grove, Castle Crag, near Mount Shasta, are all the work of this department, and a singular proof of the capacity of the West Oakland yards is that fact that the task of supplying the materials . . . did not in the least interfere with the usual work of the shop.
>
> All stations, roundhouses, and other buildings are constructed from data supplied to this department . . . so that at the place of erection nothing is left the workmen but to fit the pieces together according to the orders given. The department has charge of the shipyard, also, at West Oakland, and has built or repaired all of the steamers of the railroad company's large fleet. During the past year this one department has handled over fifteen million feet of lumber, and has given employment to some twenty five hundred men, of which number at least four hundred and fifty are carried upon the pay roll of the Oakland shops. . . . [quoted in Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey 1990 (2):28].

With growing traffic, the route from Oakland to Sacramento through Niles Canyon was proving inadequate by the mid-1870s, and a more direct route was projected along eastern shore



Plates 12 & 13: The Oakland Mole . . . Seen above in 1923, when red electric trains pulled into the train sheds on the far right of the twin-stacked ferry; mainline trains were directly ahead, and the slip for the auto ferry with its pier was at the lower left. In the 1880s, seen below, is the eastern end of the mole with West Oakland in the background, and Long Wharf to the left. The open areas of water visible here were mostly filled after 1910. *(Both views, from the collection of Vernon J. Sappers)*

of the bay, with a ferry crossing of the Carquinez Straits (Plate 15). Accordingly, on January 24, 1876, the Oakland City Council granted to Stanford and his partners a right of way along Cedar Street (adjoining Blocks 20, 22, 24, 27, 28, 29, 31, 33, and 34) to build a double-track railway north to the Carquinez Straits (Halley 1876:425). The new northern line's route is shown best on the 1878 Historic Atlas Map of Oakland. From the south, the line began at the back of the new roundhouse in the Central Pacific yards, in an unusual arrangement running through a gate cut in the rear roundhouse wall; running north to Cedar and crossing the Seventh Street line, a junction with the pier was accomplished by a separate track curving southwest from Cedar and Division streets (crossing Blocks 27-31), to a junction with the Seventh Street route to the pier one block west of Bay Street. This connecting line to the pier became locally known as "Death Curve," because of several fatal railway accidents that took place there. To the north, a branch ran to downtown Berkeley and the new University of California campus. This rather complicated arrangement meant that passengers on the northern local trains had to disembark at Seventh and Cedar and walk a block to pick up a Seventh Street train to carry them out to the pier (Vernon Sappers/Olmsted interview, April 3, 1993).

The immediate effect of the new line was to make the Oakland Point neighborhood even more subject to the constant coming and going of trains, with all of the soot and noise of contemporary wood- and coal-burning steam locomotives; in the longer term, after transcontinental trains were routed via the more direct northern line, completed to Martinez in 1879, the increasing traffic meant more work in the shops and yards. Eventually, the growth of traffic made Cedar Street a bottle neck, and long-distance trains were routed along a new bypass on filled bay lands north of Seventh and west of Cedar. This bypass, in its turn, permanently defined the western boundary of Oakland Point neighborhood, limiting the residential section of West Oakland to the already settled blocks located between the main railway lines that bounded it to the north and south.

The construction of the Oakland Mole had placed Oakland's main passenger terminal far out into the bay; with the growth of the town of Oakland into a city, this was locally felt to be something of an embarrassment. Downtown Oakland had a passenger station at Broadway, dating back to the 1860s, but this small facility was merely a stop for local service. After the completion of the line through Richmond to Sacramento in the 1870s, most long distance passenger trains entered the Oakland Mole from the north; another depot was built at Sixteenth and Wood Streets in West Oakland, next to the mudflats of the bay. But like the Broadway depot, the Sixteenth Street Station mostly served local traffic, connecting Oakland streetcar lines to local trains running out to the ferries. The original frame structure of the 1870s served this function perfectly well, but did nothing to promote the image of Oakland as a major destination in itself. Accordingly, in 1911 a massively overscaled station was built, faced with granite and designed by architects Bliss & Faville. The new station was built in conjunction with the electrification of local East Bay service, with electric trains accommodated on an elevated upper

story. Despite its imposing presence and grandly proportioned waiting room, the new Sixteenth Street Station continued to be an almost purely local stop; most long distance trains passed it by without stopping until the end of ferry service in the late 1950s made Sixteenth Street the main Oakland station by default.

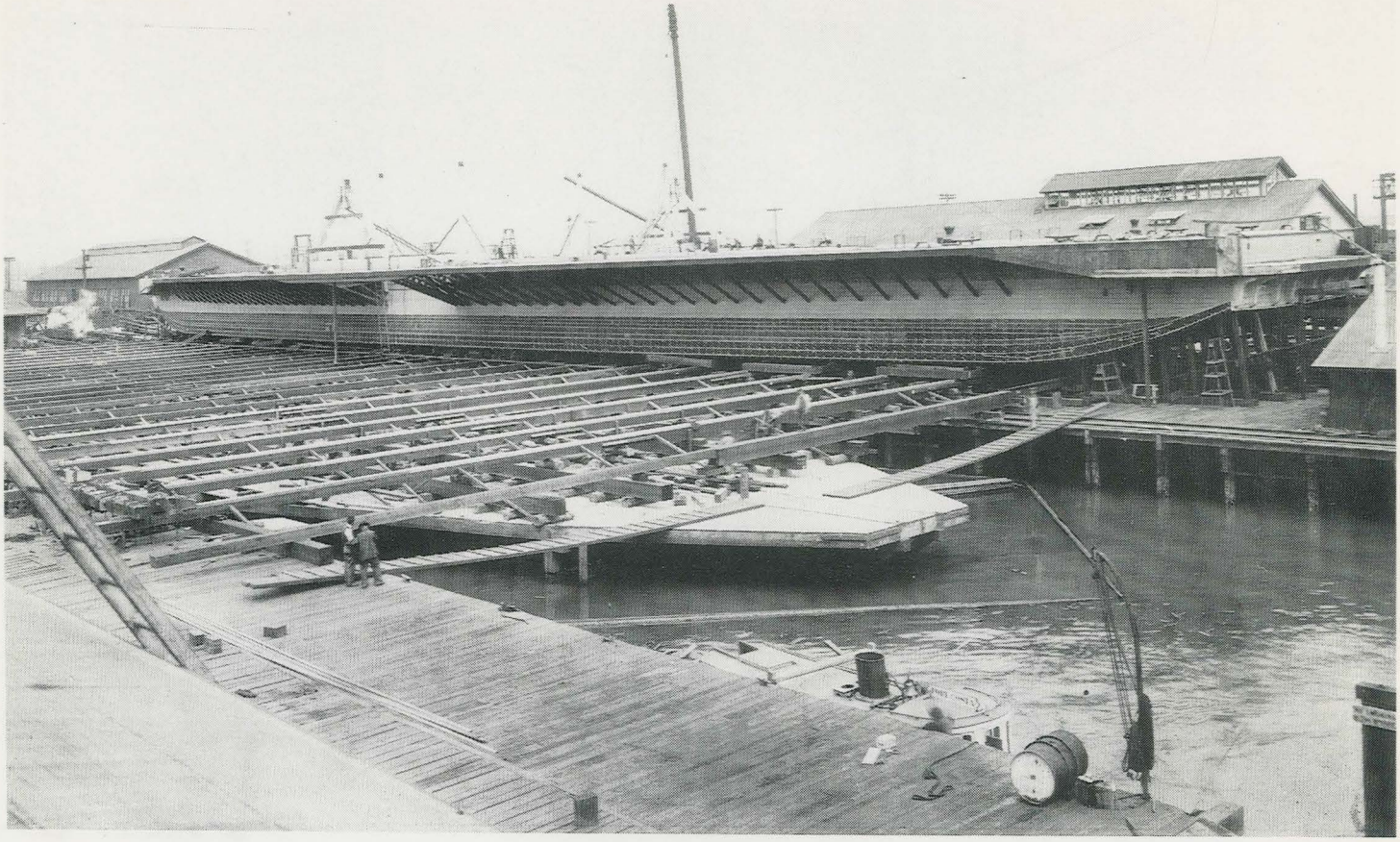
The Railroad as an Employer

Although other industries in the 1860s and 1870s in California employed large numbers of workers, such as canneries, mills, and foundries, the railroad as an employer was unique in several ways. It was the only industry to employ large numbers of workers in widely scattered locations. The range of occupations was exceptionally broad: operating employees, such as engineers, firemen, brakemen, and conductors on the trains; the full range of metal workers in the roundhouses and engine shops, such as machinists, blacksmiths, and founders; carpenters, painters, and wood-turners in the car shops; and station agents and telegraphers. In 1896 the *Illustrated History of Alameda Country* described the blacksmith department of the shops; just one of several important rail operations in West Oakland:

> The department employs one hundred and ten men, and the pay roll is growing larger every month. These are classed as follows: mechanics, thirty four, comprising smiths, carpenters, boiler makers, machinists, and painters; helpers, twenty-six; laborers, twenty-two; wipers, fifteen, being boys who are in the line of eventually becoming engineers; watchmen and dispatchers, eleven; a foreman of the roundhouse and foreman of the machine shop. The engineers number ninety-five, and firemen ninety eight. The month payroll amounts to $21,000, of which the engineers receive $10,000, the repairing branch $6,000, and the firemen $5,000. . . [quoted in Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey 1990 (2):29].

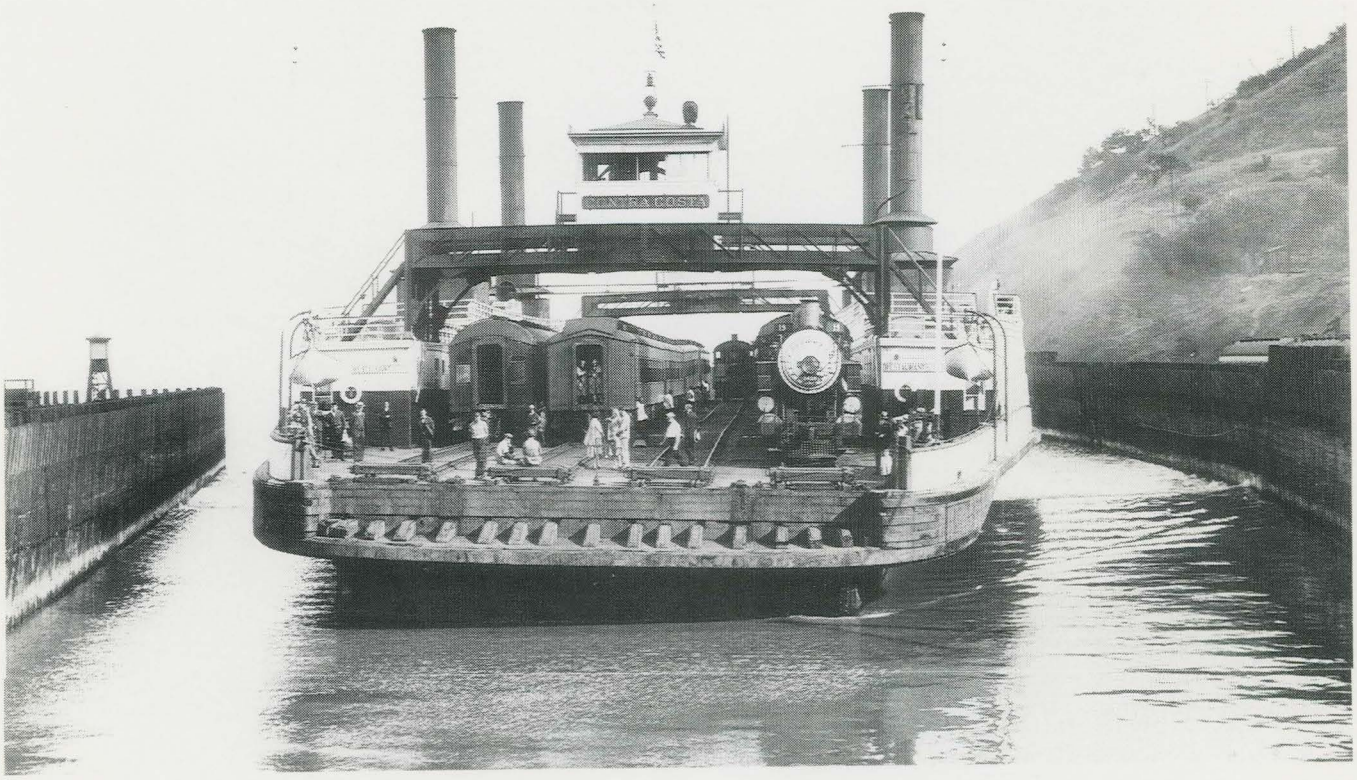
In each division of the railroad's operation in West Oakland, there was a strict and hierarchical division of labor. At the bottom, unskilled or semi-skilled jobs included car cleaners, laborers, and watchmen. The entire shop complex was presided over by the Master Mechanic, who in turn reported to the railroad headquarters in San Francisco. In some cases, skilled workers were employed by the railroad in large numbers, but also could find employment in non-railroad occupations, such as carpenters, painters, upholsterers, ship carpenters, and machinists. For many carpenters, for example, railroad work could provide a base income which they then supplemented by building houses or cabinet work on their own (Vernon Sappers/Olmsted interview, April 3, 1993).

It was within the strictly railroading occupations that the occupational hierarchy was most marked. Young men would begin work as grease monkeys or wipers in the roundhouse, progressing up to become hostlers, firemen in the engines, and finally engineers. From the figures cited above, it is possible to roughly calculate the wage scale that existed for engineers



Plates 14 & 15: *Contra Costa II* under Construction at the Southern Pacific's West Oakland Shipyard in 1914 . . . The largest rail-car transfer ferry in the world was built by Southern Pacific shipwrights and carpenters: 433 feet long, she measured 5373 gross tons. Seen below, she maneuvers into the Carquinez Straits carrying an entire passenger train. Passengers could stretch their legs, enjoy the novelty of riding a train on water, and eat at one of two restaurants beneath her bridge. Four smokestacks gave notice of her 3000 horsepower engines.

(Both Views, San Francisco Maritime National Historic Park)



and firemen in 1896: engineers were paid an average of about $105 a month, while firemen averaged $51 a month. The disparity reflected the high status accorded to engineers, and the fact that they had worked their way up as firemen. But even the firemen's wages were substantial for blue-collar workers in the late 19th century. Five or six hundred dollars a year was quite enough for a man to buy a house in West Oakland and support a family. And although railroad traffic was seasonal, it was much more steady work than comparably skilled work in the foundries of San Francisco's Tar Flat.

Railroad operating employees were on-call, required to live west of Adeline Street so that they could be summoned by messenger if they were needed. Shop employees are not known to have been under the same restrictions, and the availability of free passes on company passenger trains and ferries made it possible for some employees to live in East Oakland or even in San Francisco. But a great many lived in West Oakland, especially in the Oakland Point neighborhood, which grew up as a railroad workers' village: "railroad craftsmen, operators, and administrators all worked and settled at the Point in great numbers. So did local business people whose hotels, markets, iron works, livery stables, photo studios, saloons, and 'female boarding houses' in one way or other served the railroad and its employees or passengers. From 1869 to the 1930s, vast numbers of Point residents are listed in directories as working for the C.P.R.R. or (after 1885 the S.P. Co.) . . . ." (Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey 1990 [2]:29).

The central importance of the railroad payroll to the West Oakland economy did not have a parallel elsewhere in Oakland or anywhere in San Francisco in the late 19th century. Only when one looks outside major cities in the Bay Area can one find similar, though much smaller, examples of predominantly single-employer industrial communities: Tiburon, with the San Francisco and North Pacific Railroad; Crockett, with its sugar refinery; and Vallejo, with the Mare Island Naval Shipyard. When leading West Oakland residents formed the West Oakland Bank, the *Oakland Tribune* reported that 5,000 railroad workers received their pay through the bank each month (December 23, 1905).

Associated with the railroad, yet corporately separate, was the Pullman Palace Car Company, whose deluxe cars made the transcontinental journey attractive to middle- and upper-class travellers. Pullman operated the sleeping cars that were carried on long-distance trains that often ran over several separate railways, providing a nationwide network. As the terminus for all long-distance trains within the Bay Area (except for a few that operated south out of San Francisco), West Oakland became a hub of the Pullman system, and many of its porters settled in the Oakland Point district (Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey 1990 [2]:30).

THE RAILROAD AND ITS WORKERS

Even before it was completed, the transcontinental railroad was by far the largest employer in California. Once it established its terminus in Oakland, the railroad occupied a central place in the local economy. And nowhere was its influence felt more than in West Oakland, where railroad jobs were sought after, and where shops and lodging houses catered to those who worked for the railroad. Working for the railroad was different from other types of work available at the time, partly because of the sheer size of the company and the lack of competing railroads. The Central Pacific (later to become the Southern Pacific) was the only railroad around of any size in the Bay Area until the turn of the century. Many workers skilled in jobs peculiar to railroading had little other choice of employment.

What ordinary workers living in West Oakland thought about the railroad in its early years is not well-recorded. The railroad was popular with the public at large in the 1860s, when it was as yet unfinished and so still a plausible object of hope. After the financial crisis of the 1870s, hope gave way to increasingly bitter disappointment at the failure of the railroad to bring abundant prosperity. The economic and political power of the railroad was palpable, and was felt by many with the sense of oppression that naturally grows out of the resentment of such power. As the public gradually came to be more and more hostile to the railroad, popular journals began to depict it as an octopus bent on controlling or destroying every enterprise in California. The image of the octopus resonated with railway workers' sense of their own grievances against their powerful employer. Railroad workers might take pride in their work, but at least through the first half of this century, many of those who depended on the railroad for their livelihoods had little affection for the company and regarded its management with disdain. (Vernon Sappers/Olmsted interview, April 3, 1993). However powerful the railroad company might be, its workers were at least potentially powerful in their own right. Railway strikes could have peculiarly far-reaching effects, and the skilled workers could not simply be replaced.

The record of early labor-union efforts among the railway workers is scanty. Organized labor began in Oakland in the late 1860s, but its efforts were initially concentrated among the building trades. Here, union organizers often had a measure of success, at least in dealing with small and unorganized employers:

> The Trades' Union directed a coordinated labor campaign to win passage of an eight hour law by the 1866 session of the state legislature. The proposed law was defeated only by a slim majority. . . . Some struggles over this issue came in 1867. Although the carpenters, the largest body of craftsmen in the building trades, easily established the eight-hour day on construction jobs in San Francisco and Oakland, they met stiff opposition from Bay Area planing mills [Knight 1960:9].

But organizing workers against the largest corporation in the West was a different matter. The very completion of the transcontinental railroad threatened the nascent power of organized labor:

> The bargaining power of skilled craftsmen was seriously menaced by the new rail connection with the East, which made it easy for employers to tap the supply of labor in Chicago and other industrial centers. From 1869 on, local unions of skilled workers could no longer undertake strikes with the comfortable assurance that weeks must elapse before strikebreakers could reach the city. The protective geographical barrier behind which the San Francisco labor movement had flourished in the 1860s was permanently breached [Knight 1960:13].

The railroad brought manufactured goods to California that competed with local industries, and it brought workers willing to work for lower wages. In particular, the construction of the railroad was accomplished by Chinese laborers, imported directly from China. Initially brought in large numbers by Charles Crocker to work at low wages on the difficult construction of the line across the mountains, large numbers of Chinese continued to arrive after the railroad was completed.

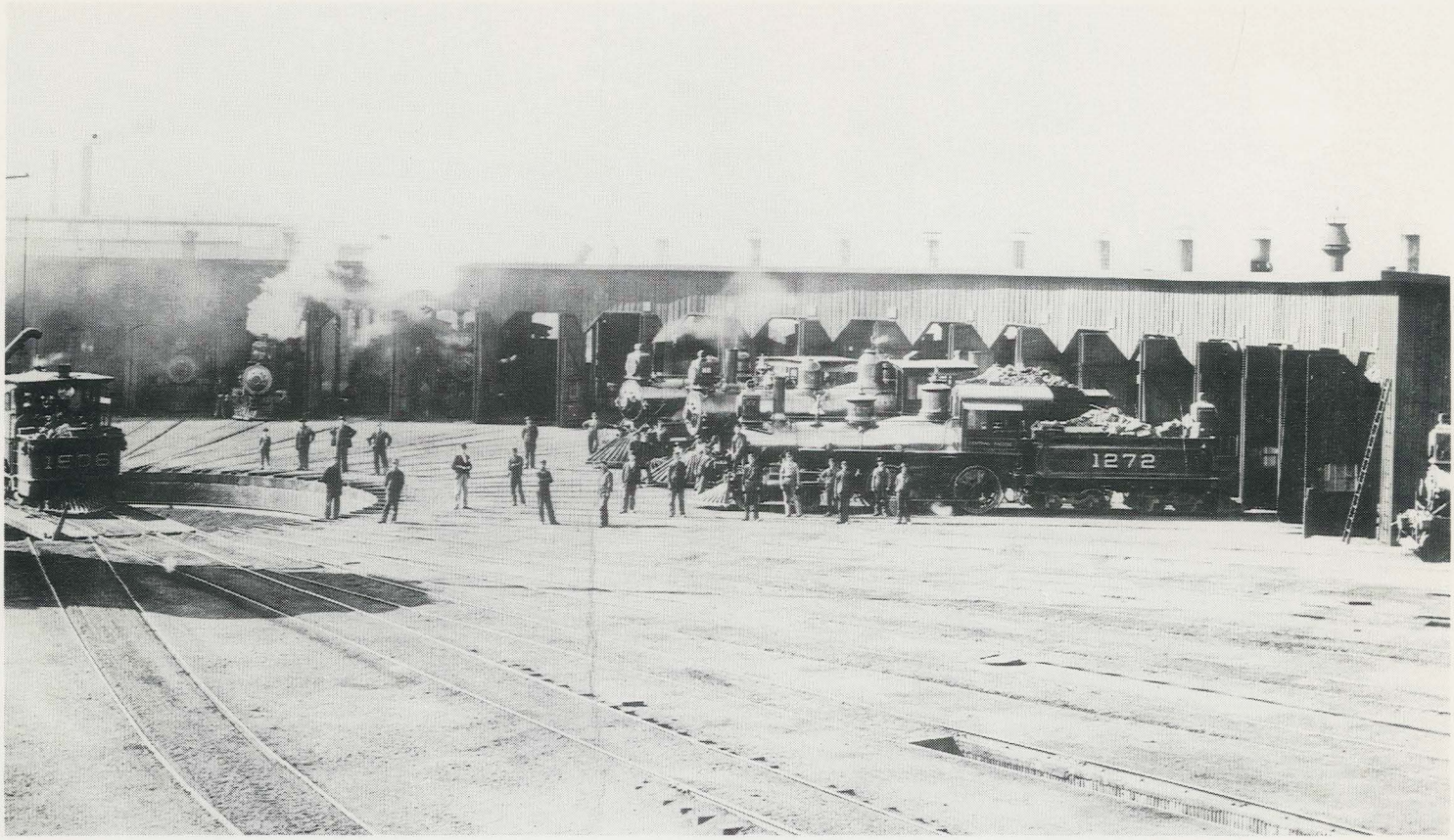
The Railroad and Anti-Chinese Agitation

Anti-Chinese feeling in California had existed since the Gold Rush, when the passage of foreign miners' laws attempted to legislatively exclude Chinese and South Americans from the mines. But because the wages of white workers were high in California, and remained so through the 1860s, the relatively small numbers of Chinese were tolerated, if not welcomed. The railway fostered a more militant anti-Chinese sentiment for several reasons. First was the enormous power of the railroad itself; anything that it did attracted attention, often unfavorable. Its use of Chinese laborers was likened, not implausibly, to a feudal system of lords and serfs--contrary to the most basic American beliefs and ideals, and doubtless especially galling to those who had fought for such beliefs in the Civil War. Second was the unexpected realization that the opening of the transcontinental line brought down wages for skilled workers by tending to equalize them with the wages of East Coast and Chicago workers. Finally, the importation of Chinese laborers was seen as an attempt on the part of the railroad to forestall the white workers' attempts to organize.

J.S. Hittell (1882) presented the following estimates for the growing Chinese population in California:

	Chinese	Total Population
1860	34,933	379,994
1870	49,277	560,247
1880	75,122	864,686

The increase in Chinese over the 20-year period was 115%, while the total increase of population was 127%. These figures, however, concealed a good bit of the real impact. While



Plates 16: The West Oakland Roundhouse in the 1870s, the Focus of the Railroad Complex . . . The characteristic design was perhaps the most useful development of Jeremy Bentham's principle of the Panopticon--a building designed for complete control from a central point. It was not at all just a place to store locomotives, but rather to keep their complicated and often individually quirky mechanisms in order--and their parts were not standardized. **Plate 17: The Switching Crew in the 1880s Worked Out of the Roundhouse . . .** Yard crews like this would defy the authority of the railroad and the government in the 1894 A.R.U. strike. *(Upper view, courtesy of the Bancroft Library; lower view from the collection of Vernon J. Sappers)*

the total California population increase included women and children, the Chinese increase consisted overwhelmingly of working-age males. So, while a typical immigrant family supplied one or sometimes two people to the work force, practically all of the Chinese arrivals directly competed for jobs in the market-place--ever more directly with the white worker. The Chinese worked for less money, for they did not bring families to support and were willing to live in conditions otherwise most frequently seen in railroad work trains, primitive mining camps, and the forecastles of Cape Horn "hell ships." There is very little record of unemployed Chinese, for they were most likely taken care of within the Chinatown communities (Olmsted et al. 1979:121)

The early and mid-1870s were prosperous years, especially for Oakland, and railroad employment was rapidly expanding. The economic boom reached its peak in 1875 and 1876, and then the local economy slid into a severe recession--the first of any magnitude to hit California. The Chinese question remained:

> Finally, Chinese immigration was particularly heavy in 1876, augmenting the labor force just as San Francisco was approaching a period of depression and serious unemployment. By early 1877 a severe decline in business activity was under way. Through the spring and summer the unemployed swelled in number, growing increasingly bitter and restless [Knight 1960:15].

The depression of the late 1870s in Oakland was certainly not the result of Chinese competition in the labor market. Rather, its causes lay in the depressed economy of the whole state, and the over-extended real-estate boom of 1875-1876. The slowdown in construction activity in Oakland, in particular, would have left many of the carpenters and masons who had directly benefitted from the property boom without work. Such skilled trades were not the province of Chinese labor at the time. And although the railroad employed Chinese laborers extensively in construction gangs, and Chinese workers may have helped build the northern line to Martinez in the 1870s, there is no record of the railroad employing them on a permanent basis in West Oakland. If anything, the railroad was one of the most stable employers of white labor in Oakland. In contrast to the building trades, the railroad employed West Oakland residents on a relatively steady basis; although the economic downturn undoubtedly affected rail traffic, the railroad was continuing to expand its operations in West Oakland. The construction of the Oakland Mole, for example, was begun in 1879 and employed many workers for two years.

The one enterprise in which the Chinese could be expected to have gained employment in sizeable numbers in West Oakland was in the laundry business. But here, the giant Contra Costa Laundry dominated employment and had an anti-Chinese policy: "The Contra Costa Laundry has been 30 years in existence and gives employment to from 230 to 250 hands. . . . Everything regardless of nationality goes at the Contra Costa Laundry--barring John Chinaman, who never has and never will set foot within these works" (*Oakland Daily Tribune*, January 30, 1887).

Therefore, working-class fears of being displaced by Chinese labor were not founded, in Oakland, on the actual state of affairs. Rather, the depth of anti-Chinese fears rested on people's

ideas of dire conditions that the future might bring. In retrospect, these fears may seem bigoted and, more particularly, misplaced. However, one should consider that many West Oakland men worked for 10 cents an hour to just barely support their families, having little or no job security. Many were economically at the mercy of the vastly powerful railroad, an organization that played the leading role in bringing large groups of Chinese laborers to California, laborers who were imported in much the same way, and at a lower cost, than the iron rails that were brought from the Eastern states. For the working class of West Oakland, the nightmare of potential destitution brought about by the cynical exploitation of Chinese labor by the rich and powerful was completely within the bounds of plausibility.

The Workingmen's Party

A sympathy meeting of railroad workers in San Francisco in July of 1877, called to express support for Pittsburgh railway strikers, ignited the fuse that sent the Workingmen's Party of California on its meteoric rise. The meeting ended in a minor mob scene, and through a combination of factors, including the overreaction of timid officials, excitable businessmen, and the sensation-hungry press, the agitation only mounted (Olmsted et al. 1979:147). Denouncing alleged abuses by privileged corporations and promising to redeem the political system from the control of business interests, the new party quickly developed strength throughout the state.

Although San Francisco was the initial scene of Workingmen's rallies, Oakland quickly followed. Oakland newspapers, like their San Francisco counterparts, greatly exaggerated descriptions of mob violence; it is likely that hostile attention from the press helped the Workingmen's movement gain attention and popularity among those whom it claimed to represent. In particular, the press portrayed the principal organizers of rallies in Oakland as the leaders of a sinister conspiracy that planned to set the city ablaze.

The agitators singled out by the Oakland newspapers were known as the Redstone brothers. These two orators, seldom individually distinguished in newspaper accounts, organized mass meetings in Oakland that paralleled the sand-lot demonstrations that Denis Kearny was leading in South of Market neighborhoods in San Francisco at the same time. After an initial meeting attracted a noisy crowd, Oakland elected officials moved quickly to stifle discontent. Businessmen were greatly alarmed at what could develop into a demonstration against their dominance of the political process, and at a special City Council meeting on July 25, 1877, following an inflammatory speech by the Redstone brothers the previous evening, the city government enrolled 500 special policemen and banned public meetings. The Redstones backed down temporarily, postponing a planned mass-meeting, and jocularly requested that the City Council reimburse them for the expenses that they had incurred for the rally that the city officials had forbidden (Wood 1883:694-696).

Although the Redstones' main popular appeal was to anti-Chinese sentiment, they should not be dismissed as merely opportunistic bigots. In their newspaper, *Legal Tender*, they

Plates 18 & 19: 1898--Just Four Years After the A.R.U. Strike . . . At least the appearance of industrial harmony characterizes these two group pictures, expressive of the hierarchy of the Southern Pacific order, still governed with absolute authority in 1898 by Collis P. Huntington, last survivor of the Big Four. Above, Master Mechanic McKenzie holds the central position, surrounded by his lieutenants, several of whom have condescended to occupy the place of honor in the group, below, of car shop workers. Note the ages of the working men--many are too young to have mustered the requisite moustache; McKenzie, on the other hand, has his beard clipped in the style of Huntington himself. *(Both views from the collection of Vernon J. Sappers)*

advocated a broad solution to problems of economic inequality, suggesting that government control over the money supply would encourage economic expansion and help protect working-class families from the disastrous effects of business cycles and the financial panics that recurred throughout the last three decades of the 19th century.

As in the case of the initial meeting that the Redstones organized, San Francisco and Oakland workers were closely connected through the Workingmen's Party. The strength of the party seems to have been higher in Oakland than in San Francisco, as nowhere else did it have such immediate electoral success. It made an impressive showing in 1878, electing Washburne Andrus as Mayor of Oakland, and a number of other candidates to state and local offices. Statewide, the party elected one-third of the delegates to a convention called to revise the state constitution (Knight 1960:17). All of this aroused exclamations of horror from established property-owners. Writing several years later, Wood still had difficulty describing the Workingmen's Party in his otherwise soberly prolix *History of Alameda County*:

> The bold times of 1877-78 help forward the communistic organizations, and to its ranks flocked all of the hoodlum and criminal elements of the State. They became the terror of San Francisco and Oakland, threatening to burn and destroy the property of the rich, and seize upon the Government by force. The result was that the Capitalists refused to invest; all improvements came to a standstill; thousands of other workmen were thrown out of employment and joined the hooting rabble. Then came the demands for a new Constitution--a Constitution that would *cinch* capital, and force those who had something to divide with those who had nothing [1883:279].

One result of the election of Workingmen's Party officials was a referendum in Alameda County on September 3, 1879, on the question of further Chinese immigration. The referendum was conceived as a good test of the breadth of anti-Chinese sentiment, not among white workers who by then could be presumed to be solidly anti-Chinese, but among an electorate that included large blocks of farmers and small businessmen who presumably had little sympathy for the Workingmen's Party. Out of 9,401 votes cast countywide, 9,336 opposed Chinese immigration. Some ballots were found invalid, but only 36 men were found to have voted in favor of the Chinese (Wood 1883:280).

This overwhelmingly lopsided result can be seen in several lights. Certainly, it disproved the then-prevalent notion that only laborers feared Chinese immigration, and that many property owners and businessmen welcomed the Chinese as cheap labor. But it may also be that the propertied classes feared the success of the Workingmen's Party and hoped that Chinese exclusion would nip incipient radicalism in the bud. The consensus that the referendum expressed, so rare in local politics, showed the attempt to define the values of a community in a way that transcended class differences--here, at least, was something virtually all citizens could agree upon. That consensus could only be reached around such a purely negative issue as exclusion shows how strained class relations had become in the depression of the late-1870s.

While it was true that the Redstone brothers and the Workingmen's Party tapped a vein of racism, the party also hit upon an economic problem that concerned the lives of the West Oakland workers. The goal of Chinese exclusion was seen by the poor and unemployed as desirable to end the killing economic competition to their own labor. The Workingmen's Party fulfilled this need, while the other parties were perceived as ignoring it. However, to those people who believed in building a true Workingmen's Party, based on unionization or a philosophy such as socialism or communism, the "Chinese Question" was a diversion, because it so engaged the attention of the laboring voter that awakening class consciousness took a back seat to the single issue of Chinese exclusion. Put differently, however, this question of class consciousness and political philosophy becomes moot. The people of West Oakland were more interested in getting what may be crudely termed as a "piece of the action" than in restructuring society. The Chinese question loomed large to these people because they desired employment at a living wage. But not until the 1894 American Railway Union strike would this need find articulate expression in West Oakland.

In the meantime, more cerebral radical reformers, such as Henry George, editor of the *Oakland Transcript* during part of the 1870s, characterized leaders of the Workingmen's Party as opportunists:

> They are merely ordinary office-seekers who took advantage of the Workingmen's organization as giving a certain vote, and who, though generally they would have endorsed communism had it been popular, would have done so no quicker than they would have endorsed imperialism or Mormonism or spiritualism or vegetarianism [1880:447].

Depending on one's point of view, George's contention is either proven or refuted by the example of the Mayor of Oakland, whom the Workingmen's Party elected in 1878 and again in 1879. Washburne R. Andrus had been a Republican but quickly became a leader of the Workingmen's Party in Oakland. As mayor, Andrus was noted for his skill in analyzing some of the problems that the city faced; M. W. Wood, who thoroughly despised the Workingmen's Party, praised Andrus for having "used his opportunity judiciously . . . [his] official documents bear evidence of deep thought and a practical mind; indeed so much was he thought of that he was appointed Secretary of the State Board of Railroad Commissioners upon the organization of that department, and, notwithstanding a change in the Government, has been retained to perform the onerous and arduous functions of that position" (1883:839). Of course, Andrus' political shifts can be taken to exemplify exactly what George said, and Andrus may have been a mere opportunist anxious to ingratiate himself with the Oakland establishment, and later with the railroad. Certainly, he had a first-class mind, and his writings show a keen appreciation of the problems that workingmen faced in Oakland.

The Workingmen's Party's power in Oakland was brief, as established political parties hastened to reestablish their hold. The local consensus on limiting Chinese immigration,

combined with fear of the consequences of frustrated radicalism, influenced Congress to drastically limit Chinese immigration in 1882. With their main speaking point gone, by 1883 the Workingmen's Party had disintegrated: "Very little is left of this party today--like a mushroom, it sprang up in a night, and vanished as suddenly" (Wood 1883:280).

A minor wave of union activity did follow in the wake of the Workingmen's Party, but in Oakland it was confined almost exclusively to the building crafts. Painters in Oakland struck successfully against a number of painting contractors attempting to return to the 10-hour day at a low daily wage. The strike involved a recently organized association of master painters, one of several such specialty building trades employers' associations formed in 1884 (Knight 1960:20). By 1888 there were as many as 75 unions in San Francisco, with a combined membership of about 15,000. While Oakland had only four unions with 5,000 members, the membership represented a considerably greater proportion of the city's population.

The American Railway Union Strike of 1894

Just as the economic downturn of 1877 engendered the Workingman's Party, likewise the aftermath of the crash of 1893 was the backdrop for the first major strike in the Bay Area, a railway strike that centered on West Oakland. The prosperity of the 1880s had been uneven; the well-off had benefitted far more than the working class. But now, "financial panic in the East and bank closures and business failures across the nation in mid-1893 signaled the arrival of one of the severest depressions in American history. The depression brought to the Bay Area the most prolonged period of unemployment since the late 1870s" (Knight 1960:31). Immediate labor unrest was forestalled by the relative absence of the Chinese issue, as the effects of the Congressional limitation of Chinese immigration 10 years earlier had resulted in a declining Chinese population in Oakland; other immigrant groups, such as the Portuguese and Slavonians, who in the 1890s and 1900s would move to West Oakland in large numbers to take up unskilled railroad jobs, were not yet present in such numbers to elicit hostile reactions.

It is noteworthy that the railway strike of 1894 did not arise directly out of local concerns: it was not a strike against the railroad itself, but against the Pullman Palace Car Company. The Pullman car builders initially struck in protest of wage reductions, and in June of 1894, the leaders of the American Railway Union, supporting the strike by the car builders, ordered ARU members out in a nationwide sympathy strike against trains carrying Pullman cars. The ARU differed from the more traditional crafts unions, such as the already existing Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, in that it was organized as a broad industrial union taking in all workers connected with railroads, irrespective of craft. In Oakland, the strike became much more a matter of the railway worker's sense of their own power and dignity than an economic dispute. Knight notes that, "though strongly opposed by the craft-unionist leaders of the railroad brotherhoods and of the AFL, the ARU strike was highly popular among California workers because here it was directed against the Southern Pacific Railroad, the largest, richest, and most hated

corporation in California" (Knight 1960:33). The threat to railway interests was made plain by the very name American Railway Union--expressing the desire to unite all of the crafts associated with railway work and present a united front to railway owners. Thus, although its immediate interests were not involved with those of the Pullman Company, the Southern Pacific had a strong stake in defeating the ARU. Both the workers and the railroad saw the strike as a dispute about power and the right to organize, not wages and hours. Both were aware that its results would define the relative power of organized labor and capital for years to come.

On the first day of the strike, June 28, the *Oakland Enquirer* described the unusual calm that prevailed in West Oakland:

> A person with the popular idea of a strike in mind would scarcely appreciate that a gigantic conflict of railway corporations and labor combinations was in progress at the pier this morning. There were present a few more people perhaps than is usual, and here and there groups of employees were engaged in earnest conversation. . . . There was no conflict of force but one of determination. A test of powers of endurance.
>
> At present things in this division are in *status quo.* The cars that were on the road at noon Wednesday are coming in, but none are going out. About twenty Pullman cars are dispatched from the pier daily and the arrivals are about the same.
>
> When the reporter first reached the pier this morning there were on "the bench" nearly every passenger conductor and brakeman in Oakland. As the time came yesterday for the 4:30 train to leave the crew went to the pier but no trains arrived from the yards. As other overland trains were due to leave other crews went down, but there were no trains.
>
> The first shock of the impending battle had to be born by the switchmen who make up the trains in the yard and take to the pier. They have refused to handle a Pullman car so only trains for the local traffic are made up.
>
> Southern Pacific General Superintendent Fillmore commented: "If the Oakland switchmen refuse to handle the Pullman cars we shall be compelled to hire men who will obey orders. That's all there is to it. These men have been trying to bring on this strike for three months. They have made a mistake so far as this coast is concerned. They can't win on the Southern Pacific's lines" [June 28, 1894].

From the start, the strike was a test of the willingness of the different railway craft unions to support one another. In West Oakland, the extent of this willingness began to become evident on the second day of the strike. The *Enquirer* reported that:

> On Seventh Street there were no trains but great throngs of people collected at the stations, looking up and down the track and wondering how they would get to the city. Such a condition of things had never been known since the local road began running, thirty years ago.
>
> About 8:45 a train was run up from the mole and the crowd of railroad men congregated about the stations shouted when they saw that Foreman Hall, from the shops, was doing the firing. The strike has reached every department in West Oakland. At 9:30 nearly 1000 railway employees had left their jobs.

Even the Portuguese coal shovelers and the painters in the shipyards had joined in the strike and at the hour named not over five men of the regular force were at work for the company.

At Bartlett Hall, corner of Pine and Seventh streets, headquarters of the Union, a crowd of railroad men are collected. Over one hundred new members were admitted to the Union this morning [June 29, 1894].

The success of the first day of the strike in bringing virtually all rail traffic to a halt showed the power of solidarity across craft union lines. Partly this success was due to the efforts of the President Roberts of the ARU local, a man that Superintendent Fillmore had called a "labor agitator." Responding to Fillmore, Roberts told the *Enquirer* reporter that, far from being an agitator, "he had worked twelve years for the S.P. and had never taken any part in an agitation until he joined the ARU. He said he was a quiet man, who never drank and did not even chew tobacco" (June 29, 1894).

That evening, a mood of celebration marked the meeting of the railway workers at Hansen's Hall (on Block 25), after Bartlett Hall (on the same block) had proved too small. Individual workers told their stories in simple and direct terms. Charles Hall, who had been given a job as a towerman after losing his arm, said that he "believed that there was strength in union and that the ARU would win. Personally, he had no grievance with the railroad company, as they had treated him fairly, but it might be that after the strike was over they might cut his other arm off." Ed Powers, a painter, said that he "had put in his application to the ARU and recognized that its interests and those of labor generally are one. This is a fight to the finish. If we don't win this time it will be useless for us to antagonize organized capital again. We can show that there are heroes in peace as well as in war" (*Oakland Enquirer*, June 29, 1894).

Local notables spoke at the meeting to show their support for the strike, and to voice their concern that the strike stay peaceful. City Councilman William Watkinson said:

I desire to counsel moderation. Don't do anything rash. Everything is tied up. I think pretty tight. I was down at the yard and I wouldn't like to undertake to switch a train out. All I have to say is that you should keep your heads; keep sober and don't drink. If there is any attempt to create disorder put your foot down on it. I had a talk with the chief of police and he has sent his officers away, all but one or two. He says he don't think that they were necessary, and we don't, or those deputy sheriffs, either [*Oakland Enquirer,* June 29, 1894].

The fact that the strike had not been called over mundane local wage issues but as a test of union solidarity was expressed most forcefully by one of the union officials, J. G. Walton, who was able to articulate with considerable intellectual sophistication what the less well-educated trainmen saw in the simpler and more direct terms of personal loyalty:

This movement did not have its inception yesterday or the day before. It has been gathering and rolling like a snowball. It means more than the present conflict between

Pullman and his employees. It is an outbreak of the conflict between capital and labor. We are fighting for a principle--not merely for Mr. Pullman's employees but for our own rights--for the inalienable right of every man to labor and to be paid for that labor at a rate that will enable him to live like a man. Are we going to stand by and be robbed of our rights? If not, we must all stand together. Our interests are one. It affects the merchant and every line of business. It is because labor is unpaid or unemployed that there is stagnation in trade today [*Oakland Enquirer*, June 29, 1894].

There were some railway workers who refused to participate in the strike. Engineer Jeffries, for example, was described as "a most valuable man for the company now and the strikers used every effort to get him to quit work, but he was firm in his determination to stand by the company" (*Oakland Enquirer*, June 30, 1894). The previous night, Jeffries had been hit on the head by a stone thrown by a "young Hoodlum" at Seventh and Wood streets. But apart from a few thrown stones and some minor acts of sabotage against the railway signal system, the first week of the strike remained peaceful. United States Marshall Baldwin admitted that, "I have this to say for the strikers, they have not, as yet, committed any violence or depredation to me or any other person. Their leaders have faithfully kept their promises in this regard. I understand the bitter, hostile feeling against the railroad all over the state" (*Oakland Enquirer*, July 6, 1894). More than once, however, serious violence had only been averted at the last minute when the railroad attempted to run a few trains, such as the San Ramon local:

As the train started up for Sixteenth Street Station several of the crowd [of strikers] jumped on board and at the station suddenly the steam was shut off and the train stopped. At this time several men attempted to invade the cab. A deputy in the cab drew a revolver and attempted to hold the crowd in check.

He threatened to shoot, but in the meantime the cab had been boarded from the other side. A man held a pickaxe at the head of the deputy and declared that if he fired he would brain him [*Oakland Enquirer*, July 5, 1894].

Similar scenes were repeated on July 5th throughout the Oakland yards, as the strikers took possession of the huge complex. The striking workers seemed to converge spontaneously on the shops, as if to assert their right to possess them. Incredibly, there was still no violence:

Striking railwaymen took full possession of the railroad yards at West Oakland yesterday. Hundreds of them made their way to the shops and through the yards, compelling the men at work to quit. The disturbances were frequent, though not a soul was injured.

After taking possession of the yards the men turned their attention to the trains running on the local and suburban service. Train after train was stopped, and in a most dramatic manner. There were hundreds of women and children in the great crowds on the long mole, and in two instances men, women, and children threw themselves on the rails in front of the advancing engines, thus forming a human barricade against which the men at the throttles dared not run their engines. Once stopped the firemen

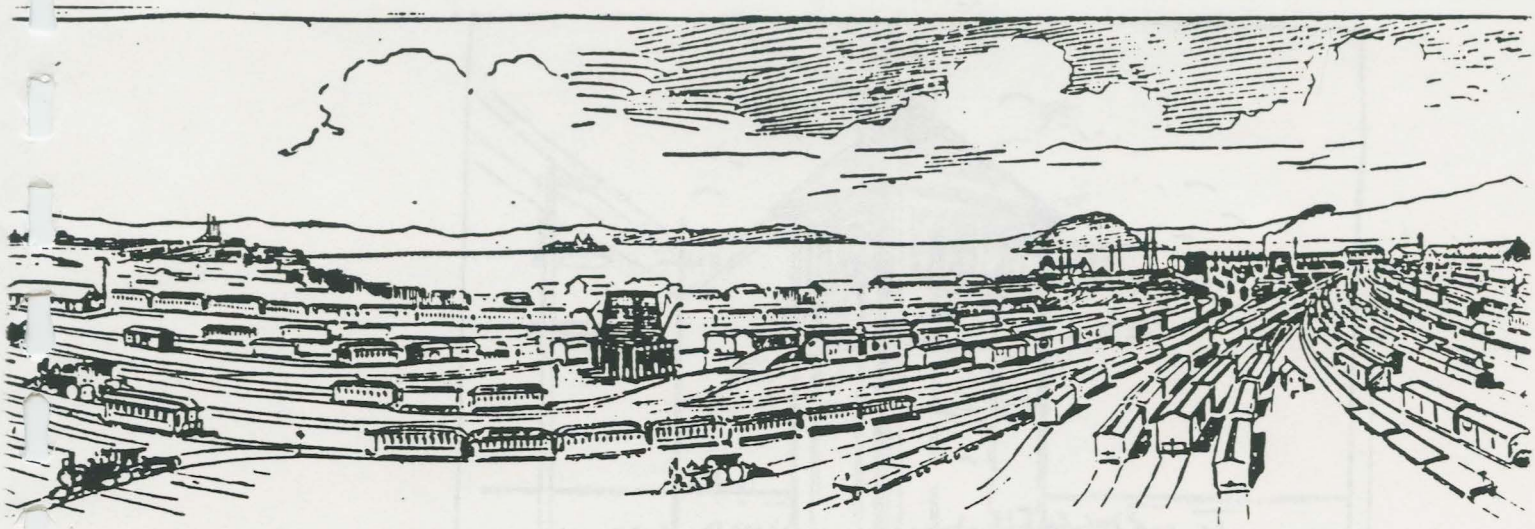


Plate 20: Railroad Yards, West Oakland, from Peralta to the Mole, Where the Trains are Tied Up
San Francisco Examiner, July 3,1894

The following message has been received at West Oakland. "Chicago: July 4--The troops cannot run the trains. They can't get scabs to run them. Stand pat. Use no violence." Eugene V. Debs, President A.R.U.
Oakland Enquirer, July 5, 1894

Plate 21: West Oakland--A Mob: Local Trains Stopped
Trainmen & Gatemen Forced Off--Deputies & Policemen Find Themselves Helpless

The first actual violence during the strike in Oakland occurred this forenoon, when at about 11:30, the three local trains . . . were stopped and the firemen taken off. . . . The trains were stopped by flagging them just before they went upon the mole. When the Alameda train came along it was stopped as it was rounding the curve. Fireman B. James, who is a member of the A.R.U., but had gone to work, was dragged from the locomotive and very roughly handled. The passengers were told to keep to their seats, and the train would run to the pier. This was done. . . . There was a great crowd and crush on Seventh Street when the Oakland train was stopped before going on the mole. The deputy sheriffs and policemen were simply lost in the surging excited mass.

Oakland Enquirer, July 5, 1894
(Drawing from the San Francisco Examiner, July 6, 1894)

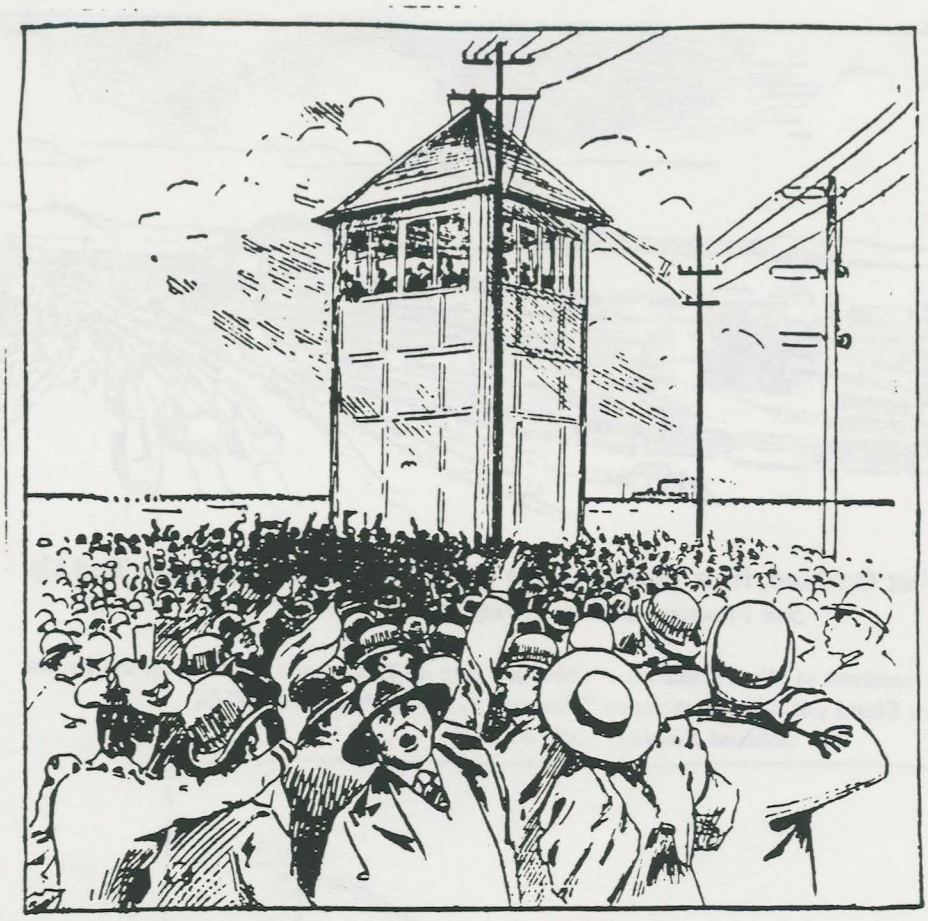
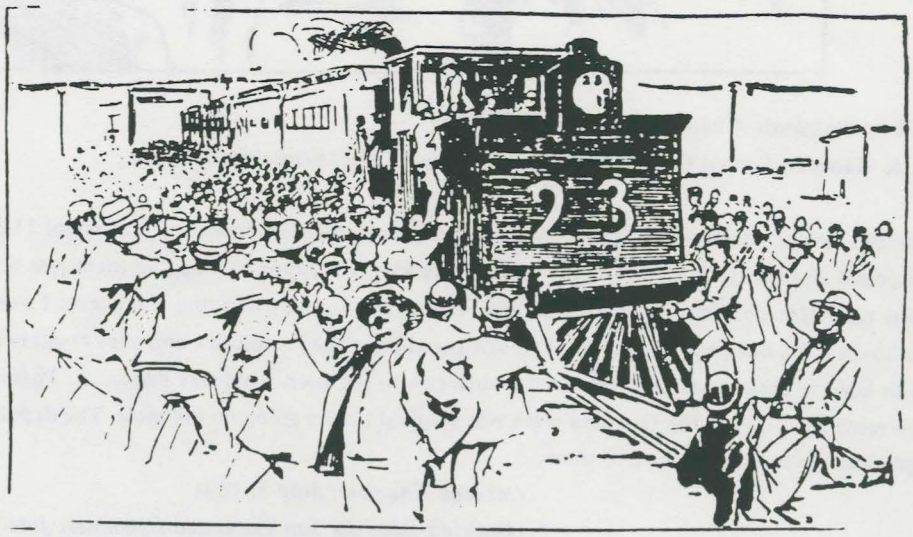


Plate 22: Great Body of Oakland Strikers Demand that the Guardian of Signal Tower #2 Leave his Station. . .
The Oakland police force and deputy sheriffs have been overpowered. Crowds of strikers are in possession of West Oakland's yards, roundhouse, and local trains. Not a train is moving and no attempt is being made to move one. The broad and narrow gauge line boats have stopped running. The officers of the company are powerless. The strikers raided the pier and drove Division Superintendent Wilder and his staff to shelter. . . . Wilder has sent an appeal for troops, saying that the Sheriff and Marshalls have demonstrated their inability to cope with the strikers. . . . At Seventh and Wood, four men walked into the middle of Seventh Street. Waving his hand, one of them cried, "Men, we want volunteers to follow us to the yard. Who is coming?" From hundreds of throats came the yell, "We are!" And the rush for the street was made. Scores of women joined the mob and many of them tearfully begged their male relatives to go home. . . . Strikers swarmed over the yards. Switchmen, oilers, and car cleaners were routed out of their hiding places, pale and trembling. . . . "Will you promise not to work for the company anymore during the strike?" was the question put to all. . . . The crowd marched down the mole to Tower #2, intent upon stopping the local trains and blockading the line.

A striker climbed the ladder on the tower and said, "I want 100 men to tie up the narrow gauge at once." In less than five minutes, the hundred men started for the narrow gauge. "Now I want fifty men to kill the engine. . . ." The deputies and engineers watched the drawing of the fires without lifting their hands. "I can't stop a multitude," said Shorty Orth, the engineer, "and I am satisfied that you are."



San Francisco Examiner, July 5, 1894

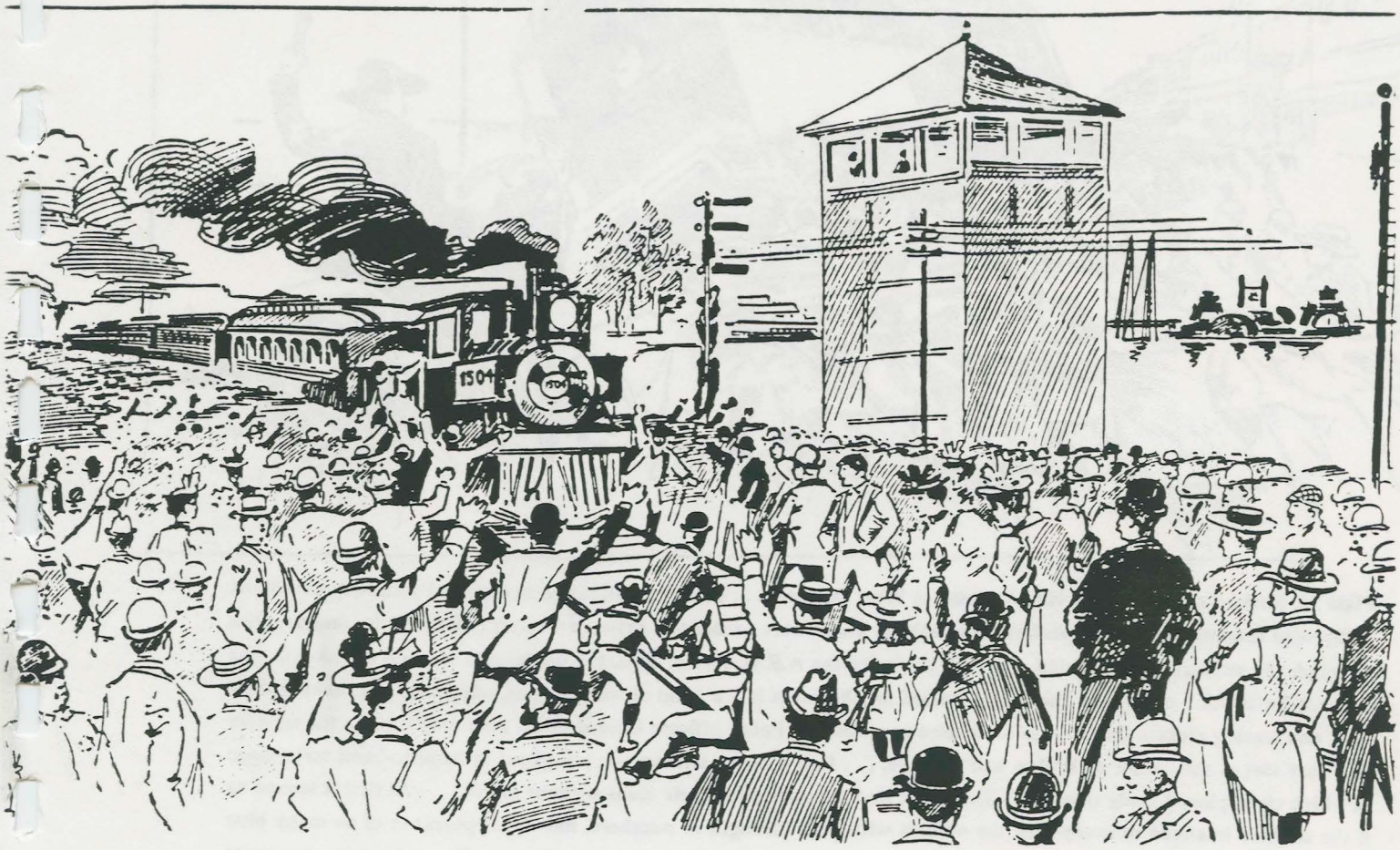


Plate 23: The Alameda "Cannon Ball" Train Stopped by a Human Barricade on the Oakland Mole Yesterday . . . "Here she comes boys, get ready to stop her." At the word of command, half a dozen men stretched themselves at full length across the track, while some of their companions ran towards the train to warn the engineer. As the train approached, Engineer Henry Hahn saw those human forms lying across the tracks and did the only thing that was left for him, brought the train to a stop. In an instant the crowd swarmed with strikers as "Billy" James, the fireman, was invited to join the A.R.U.

San Francisco Examiner, Special Morning Edition, July 5, 1894

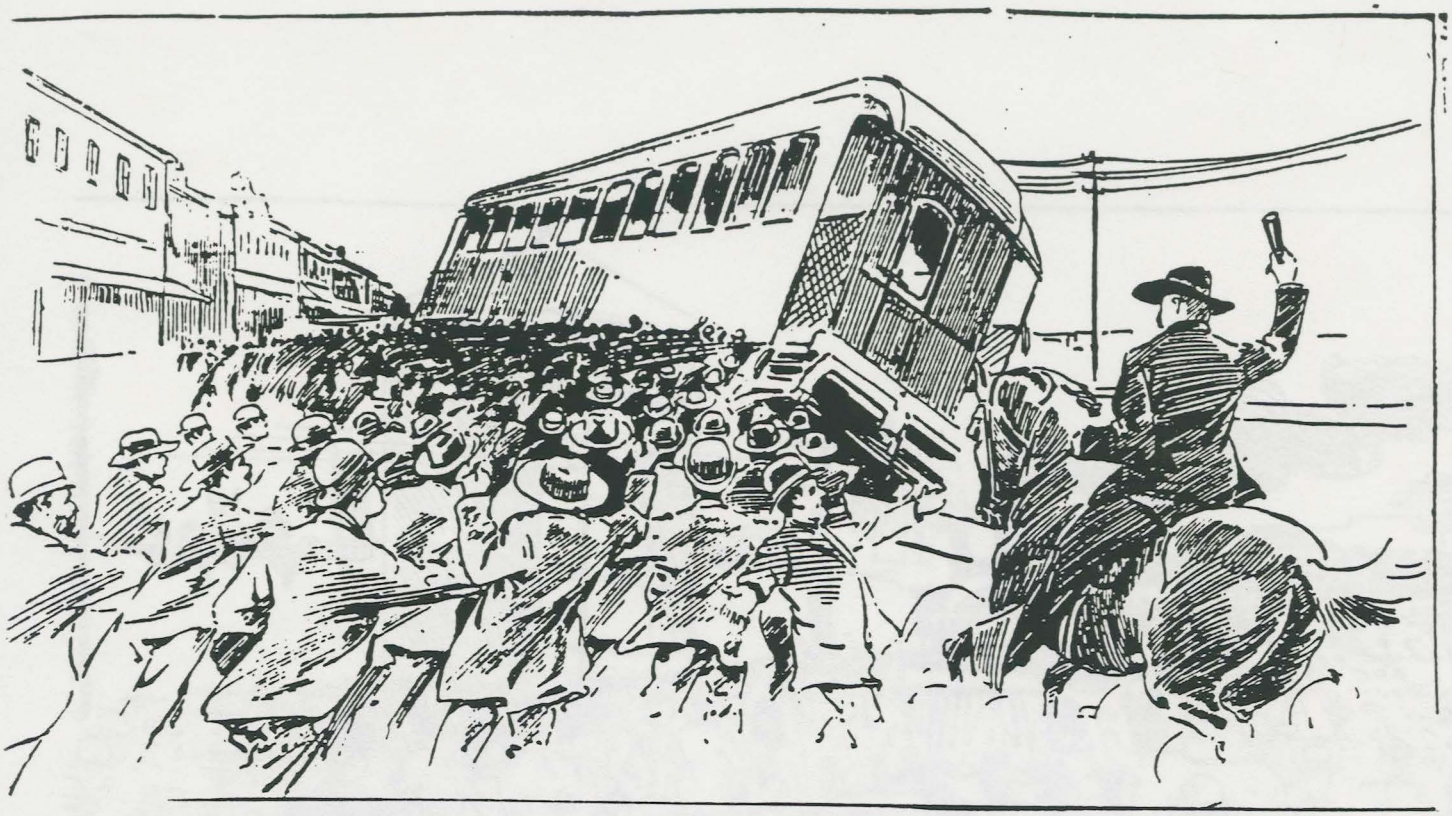
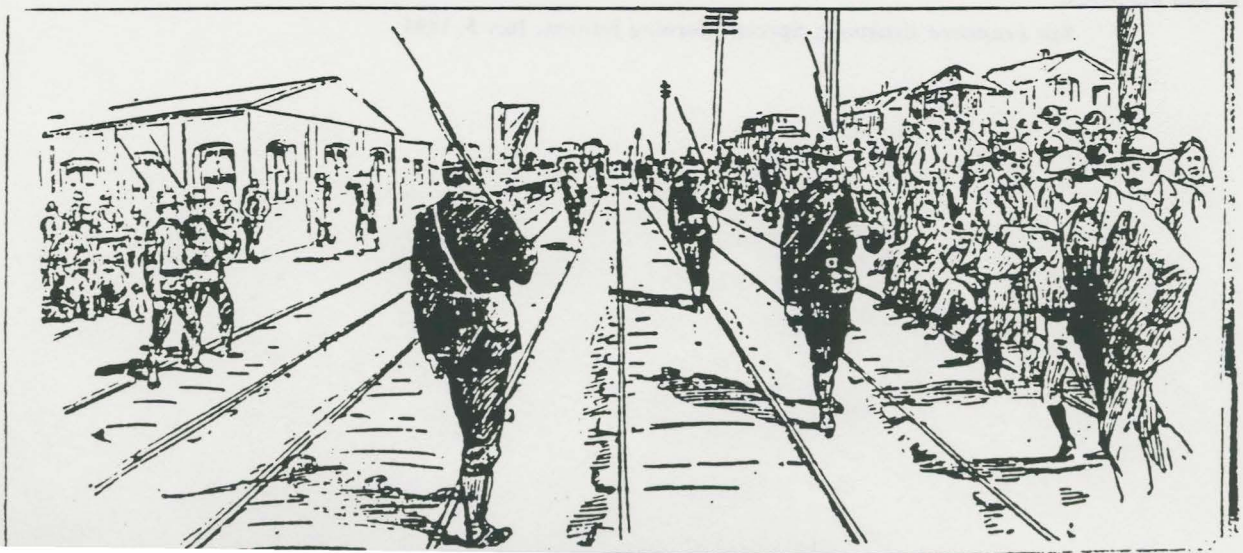


Plate 24: Strike Leader Charley Hall Arrested in West Oakland . . . The strike situation in Oakland yesterday developed a degree of violence that had heretofore been lacking. There were encounters between strikers and the police and deputies in which the strikers were worsted. . . . The leader of the A.R.U. forces, Hall, the one-armed man on horseback, was arrested for inciting a riot. . . . The crowd started for the yards like a band of wild Indians, whooping and shaking their fists, and tearing pickets from fences to be used as clubs. . . . Police officers headed down Pine Street to cut the strikers off. They met at the corner of Willow and Atlantic. . . . Half a dozen strikers were engaged in hand-to-hand scrimmage in which clubs played lively tatoos. . . . The police and deputies plied their clubs without mercy. . . . At first it looked as if the strikers intended to overpower the officers with pure strength of numbers, but the appearance of so many blue uniforms of the city police inspired a certain amount of terror and they fought not half as hard as when their opponents were Sheriffs and Deputies. *San Francisco Examiner,* July 13, 1894.

Plate 25: The National Guard at the Railroad Yards . . . There were no large gatherings of strikers . . . on the streets or near the railroad. The moles and roundhouse were well protected by the United States Marines. . . . Many people went to the West Oakland yards to look at the artillerymen of the National Guard. . . . there was nothing threatening about these spectators. . . . Some people remarked that the strike was practically over.

San Francisco Call, July 14, 1894



> and train hands were taken from their posts by the strikers, the fires in the engines raked, and all traffic along the mole brought to a complete standstill. The railroad officials said they were powerless to proceed and asked for Federal and State interference [*San Francisco Examiner*, July 5, 1845].

The Master Mechanic at the West Oakland shops was a particular target of the strikers: "He represented the railroad as far as the men were considered, and was always a person of considerable influence--a very powerful person, indeed" (Vernon Sappers/Olmsted interview April 3, 1993). Master Mechanic McKenzie--portrayed by the *Examiner's* artist as a fat, overdressed man--expressed his skepticism of the protection offered by the public authorities, alone in the deserted roundhouse prior to its invasion by the strikers:

> Master Mechanic McKenzie was encountered by an *Enquirer* man who was walking into the roundhouse yesterday:
>
> "How did you get in here?" [he asked]
>
> "Walked in" replied the reporter.
>
> "Didn't those Sheriff's Deputies try to stop you?"
>
> "No"
>
> "Well I don't think they could stop anything. Why if my boy with a broomstick couldn't do better I'd send him home. There isn't a man of them that has a scar yet, or hair where any man should have it They get two dollars and fifty cents a day and they want their job to last. Some of them hasn't done anything for the last six months."
>
> "When do you look for this condition to end?"
>
> "It will end when the people of the United States who want these trains run will afford us protection to run them. Why, that crowd came down here yesterday and dragged the men off the train. There was one old man, Morgan, I think was, from up the country, whose son was at work. He came down to say goodby before he went away and when they were hustling the boy away the old man interfered and he was hit and kicked in the face" [*Oakland Enquirer*, July 6, 1894].

McKenzie's loss of authority was made clear by the strikers' determination to patrol the shops and yards to see that fires in the engines' boilers were not relit and that strikebreakers had not been secreted in the roundhouse. The workers were joined by men from Dunsmuir and Sacramento, running their own ARU trains down the deserted tracks, and bringing boxcars full of rifles and blasting powder. Strings or freight cars were set out along the tracks west of the Sixteenth Street Station and in other key positions in West Oakland to make it impossible for any non-ARU train to enter the yards or run out to the pier (*Oakland Enquirer*, July 7, 1894). One such position was the intersection of Seventh and Cedar streets, where the *Examiner* artist drew a boxcar neatly placed along the Cedar Street tracks, completely blocking both tracks of the Seventh Street line.

On both sides, though, the moves were cautious: "This is a little game of chess between the men and the company," remarked one striker to a reporter, "each now appears to be awaiting

the next move of the other. The strikers have their pickets upon every point of the field and are thoroughly prepared" (*Oakland Enquirer*, July 9, 1894).

With the arrival of Federal troops, the railroad was able to reassert control over the yards and shops; in West Oakland this was mostly peaceful, but elsewhere, such as in Sacramento, there was considerable bloodshed. In West Oakland, the strikers had prudently taken steps to put out of order much of the signal system that the safety of the vast complex of yards and pier approaches depended upon. By July 11, the railroad attempted to operate some trains out of Alameda. But the process of getting any rail traffic moving in the face of continued opposition of the strikers was a slow one; on July 12, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that "among those in West Oakland who have followed the work of tying up the road it is generally conceded that the system is completely demoralized and can only be put in working order after the expenditure of much time and labor."

Increasing tension between the striking ARU men and members of the established operating brotherhoods inevitably worked to the advantage of the railroad. The death of engineer Sam Clark, following the sabotage of a trestle near Sacramento, brought a pained reaction from F. V. Myers, local chairman of the locomotive engineer's union:

> It is said that myself and others of the order have endeavored to work against the American Railway Union. This is not true. We have simply endeavored to protect our own order and save it from disintegration; beyond that we have treated the American Railway Union with more than fairness in this strike. Can they say the same regarding their treatment of us? Our members have been threatened and vilified. In some cases, they have been told that if they dared to take a train out they would never come back alive. They have been warned that they have homes which they might expect to find destroyed on their return, and wives and children that might be molested.
>
> In regard to the derailing of train 4 this afternoon, I cannot in words express my sorrow for the loss to us of one of our oldest and most valued members, Engineer Sam Clark. Knowing him personally, as I have, for years, I have always found him a man of sterling integrity, and in his profession almost without a peer.
>
> Again, words fail me to express my indignation and contempt for the cowardly method used by those who presumably considered themselves as acting in the interests of workingmen [*San Francisco Chronicle*, July 12, 1894].

The pain and anger that Myers expressed must have permeated social relations in West Oakland during and after the strike. The ARU leaders had done their best to prevent violence, but acts of sabotage were one of the few satisfyingly effective ways in which individual strikers could express their otherwise impotent anger at the immensely powerful railroad. The statements of the railway workers that were recorded by the press express the conflict between strongly held values that the events of the strike brought to the surface--working-class values of loyalty to one's mates, respect for law, pride in one's union, contempt for underhanded cowardice, the right of a man to express his outrage with his fists--all of these came into conflict, one way or another, at different times for different railway workers in West Oakland in 1894.

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> "When do you look for this condition to end?"
>
> "It will end when the people of the United States who want these trains run will afford us protection to run them. Why, that crowd came down here yesterday and dragged the men off the train. There was one old man, Morgan, I think was, from up the country, whose son was at work. He came down to say goodby before he went away and when they were hustling the boy away the old man interfered and he was hit and kicked in the face" [*Oakland Enquirer*, July 6, 1894].

McKenzie's loss of authority was made clear by the strikers' determination to patrol the shops and yards to see that fires in the engines' boilers were not relit and that strikebreakers had not been secreted in the roundhouse. The workers were joined by men from Dunsmuir and Sacramento, running their own ARU trains down the deserted tracks, and bringing boxcars full of rifles and blasting powder. Strings or freight cars were set out along the tracks west of the Sixteenth Street Station and in other key positions in West Oakland to make it impossible for any non-ARU train to enter the yards or run out to the pier (*Oakland Enquirer*, July 7, 1894). One such position was the intersection of Seventh and Cedar streets, where the *Examiner* artist drew a boxcar neatly placed along the Cedar Street tracks, completely blocking both tracks of the Seventh Street line.

On both sides, though, the moves were cautious: "This is a little game of chess between the men and the company," remarked one striker to a reporter, "each now appears to be awaiting

the next move of the other. The strikers have their pickets upon every point of the field and are thoroughly prepared" (*Oakland Enquirer*, July 9, 1894).

With the arrival of Federal troops, the railroad was able to reassert control over the yards and shops; in West Oakland this was mostly peaceful, but elsewhere, such as in Sacramento, there was considerable bloodshed. In West Oakland, the strikers had prudently taken steps to put out of order much of the signal system that the safety of the vast complex of yards and pier approaches depended upon. By July 11, the railroad attempted to operate some trains out of Alameda. But the process of getting any rail traffic moving in the face of continued opposition of the strikers was a slow one; on July 12, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that "among those in West Oakland who have followed the work of tying up the road it is generally conceded that the system is completely demoralized and can only be put in working order after the expenditure of much time and labor."

Increasing tension between the striking ARU men and members of the established operating brotherhoods inevitably worked to the advantage of the railroad. The death of engineer Sam Clark, following the sabotage of a trestle near Sacramento, brought a pained reaction from F. V. Myers, local chairman of the locomotive engineer's union:

> It is said that myself and others of the order have endeavored to work against the American Railway Union. This is not true. We have simply endeavored to protect our own order and save it from disintegration; beyond that we have treated the American Railway Union with more than fairness in this strike. Can they say the same regarding their treatment of us? Our members have been threatened and vilified. In some cases, they have been told that if they dared to take a train out they would never come back alive. They have been warned that they have homes which they might expect to find destroyed on their return, and wives and children that might be molested.
>
> In regard to the derailing of train 4 this afternoon, I cannot in words express my sorrow for the loss to us of one of our oldest and most valued members, Engineer Sam Clark. Knowing him personally, as I have, for years, I have always found him a man of sterling integrity, and in his profession almost without a peer.
>
> Again, words fail me to express my indignation and contempt for the cowardly method used by those who presumably considered themselves as acting in the interests of workingmen [*San Francisco Chronicle*, July 12, 1894].

The pain and anger that Myers expressed must have permeated social relations in West Oakland during and after the strike. The ARU leaders had done their best to prevent violence, but acts of sabotage were one of the few satisfyingly effective ways in which individual strikers could express their otherwise impotent anger at the immensely powerful railroad. The statements of the railway workers that were recorded by the press express the conflict between strongly held values that the events of the strike brought to the surface--working-class values of loyalty to one's mates, respect for law, pride in one's union, contempt for underhanded cowardice, the right of a man to express his outrage with his fists--all of these came into conflict, one way or another, at different times for different railway workers in West Oakland in 1894.

THE TROOP OF CAVALRY CHARGING UPON THE OAKLAND STRIKERS AT GOSS AND CEDAR STREET!

Plate 26: West Oakland--July 16 . . . An attempt was made this evening to blow up the local train, connecting with the 9 p.m. boat from San Francisco. . . . Giant powder was placed on the track. . . . The train was well filled and when it reached Kirkham there was a loud explosion, then a flash of flame followed by dense smoke. . . . Within minutes a dozen men had gathered at the corner of Goss and Cedar. . . . In four minutes there were a hundred, in five, six hundred. . . . They had stones in their pockets and clubs in their hands. Some had knives with large blades . . . to cut the rubber air-brake hose. . . . "Here come the troops. . . ." The cavalry rushed on until the noses of the horses reached over the shoulders of those in the front ranks. . . . The animals made for the center of the crowd. There was a panic. . . Then came the infantry down Goss Street and drove back those who sought to escape the cavalry. . . . Bayonet points sank just deep enough to make the crowd jump forward lively. . . . The crowd broke and ran and a number of men ran to widow Dolan's home at 1836 Goss Street. . . long suspected as a meeting place for turbulent strikers.

Captain Jenks Orders the Raid on 1836 Goss Street [Block 28]
Much against the will of Mrs. Mary Dolan, her house was searched. . . . A crowd gathered and made flippant remarks. . . . "Don't talk back to me," warned the Captain. The crowd hooted. "Charge that crowd," he cried. His men moved double quick with their bayonets and the crowd melted away.

San Francisco Examiner, July 18, 1894

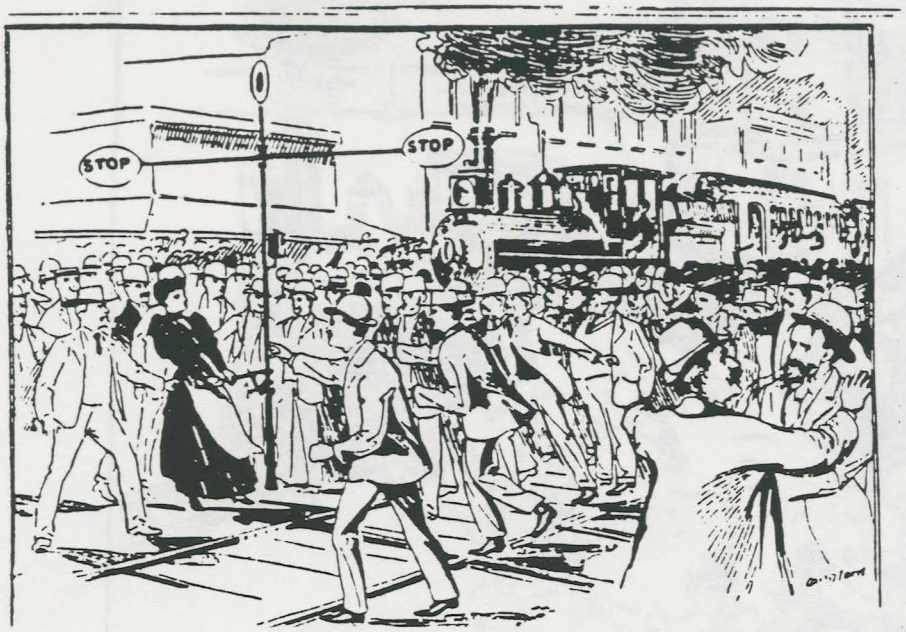


Plate 27: Woman Breaks Blockade . . .

This morning the strikers made a dead set to tie up the narrow gauge road, not by taking away the fireman from the locomotive, but by inducing the watchman who turns the semaphore at the intersection of Seventh and Webster streets to desert his post, and in this they were signally successful. Between 7 a.m. and 10 they induced no less than three men, one after another, to throw away his job.

A deputy named French had been set to guard the switchman, and he proved too officious. . . . The strikers made a demand on Sheriff McKillican to discharge French. He did not do this, but he ordered French to the office. . . . When the 10:15 narrow gauge came up from the pier it found the semaphore had not been set for it to cross, and of course, the engineer would not go ahead without the signal. The switchman had gone. . .there was nothing to do but for the train to wait on the south side of Seventh Street.

While it waited for half an hour a great crowd gathered. . . . At last a young woman, accompanied by a man, made her way through the crowd. She was Miss Tilson, the station agent, and her companion was Tinkham, the station agent at Franklin, who had telephone communication with the pier.

Miss Tilson had been ordered to turn the semaphore, and she did so. She took the lever and whirled the signal around, and then returned to her office. The train passed up, and in a few minutes it came down and passed again. . . . Nobody in that crowd offered to molest Miss Tilson, but a woman exclaimed, "She ought to be ashamed to call herself a woman!"

Oakland Enquirer, July 3, 1894

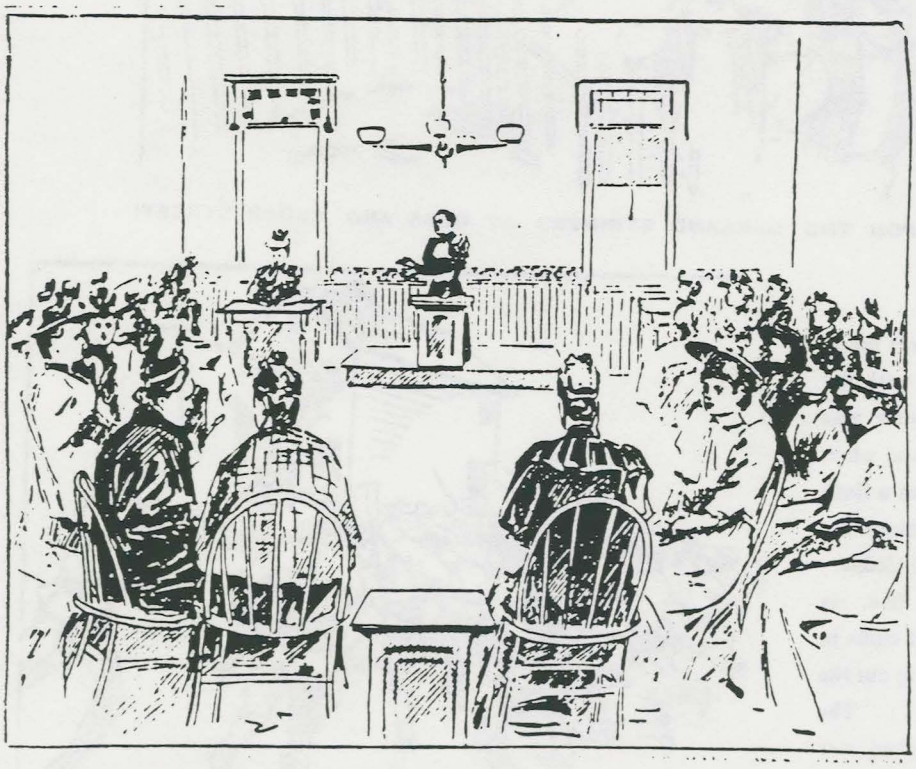


Plate 28: Ladies' Sympathetic League Meets Every Day at Bartlett Hall

The families of some of those who have thrown up their positions in the employ of the railroad company are in destitute circumstances, and for them, aid is needed. Contributions to some extent have been received, largely through the efforts of the Ladies' Sympathetic League, but much more additional help is needed. This evening an open meeting will be held at Hansen Hall by the Railway Union to which the ladies are especially invited.

Oakland Enquirer, July 9, 1894

(Drawings appeared in the *San Francisco Examiner* on July 4 and July 9)

In this sense, West Oakland reflected the effect of the 1894 strike throughout the nation. Violence tended to rebound to the advantage of the railroad companies by alienating public opinion from the strikers and dividing the railway workers among themselves. When the national strike was finally called off by Eugene Debs in late July, it had failed in its attempt at an industrial, rather than craft-based, unionism. Although railway workers made some gains in succeeding years, they did so incrementally. Their successes were limited to the upper echelon of locomotive engineers and conductors. Fifteen years would pass before the railroad's power would be challenged again.

Women and the ARU Strike

The most vivid description of the strike activity in West Oakland, written by Jack London, is told from a woman's point of view in her cottage on Pine Street, just south of Seventh Street. Having cast the main male character as a teamster, London called this the teamster's strike [1901], but the pattern of violence reflects railroad strike activity within the project area:

> It began quietly, as the fateful unexpected so often begins. Children, of all ages and sizes, were playing in the street, and Saxon, by the open front window, was watching them and dreaming day dreams of her child soon to be. . . . One of the children pointed up Pine Street toward Seventh. All the children ceased playing, and stared and pointed. They formed into groups, the larger boys, of from ten to twelve, by themselves, the older girls anxiously clutching small children . . . or gathering them into their arms.
>
> She saw the larger boys rush to the gutter, pick up stones, and sneak into the alleys between the houses. Smaller boys tried to imitate them. The girls, dragging the tots by the arms, banged gates and clattered up the front steps of the small houses. Doors slammed behind them, and the street was deserted, though here and there front shades were drawn aside so that anxious-faced women might peer forth. Saxon heard the uptown train puffing as it pulled out from Center Street. Then, from the direction of Seventh, came a hoarse, throaty manroar.
>
> Leaning out, she saw a dozen scabs, conveyed by as many special police and Pinkertons, coming down the sidewalk on her side of the street. They came compactly, as if with discipline, while behind, disorderly, yelling confusedly, stooping to pick up rocks were seventy-five or a hundred of the striking shopmen. . . . In the hands of the special police were clubs. The Pinkertons carried no special weapons. The strikers, urging on from behind, seemed content with yelling their rage and threats, and it remained for the children to precipitate the conflict. . . . From across the street came a shower of stones. Most of them fell short, though one struck a scab on the head. The man was no more than twenty feet from Saxon. He reeled towards her directly in front of her picket fence, drawing a revolver. With one hand he brushed the blood from his eyes and with the other he discharged the revolver into the Isham house. A Pinkerton seized his arm to prevent a second shot, and dragged him along. . . a wilder roar went up from the strikers, while a volley of stones came from between Saxon's house and Molly Donahue's. . . . From their hard determined faces--fighting men by profession--Saxon could augur nothing but bloodshed and death [London 1913a:186].

Because so much of the strike activity involved attempts to stop trains along Seventh Street, the people living in houses within a block or two could choose to become involved or not. But few of the working-class households south of Seventh Street could avoid the direct and immediate economic impact of the 1894 strike. "The men were beginning to clamor for their money and as three months' pay is due there has been some talk of assigning their claims and attaching a ferryboat, but they say that this might have the appearance of harassing the company or 'kicking a man when he is down'" (*Oakland Enquirer,* July 6, 1894). Clearly, the railroad employees, who made up and estimated 65% of the working force in the West Oakland project area, could not function long without their railroad pay. But the Southern Pacific had decided to withhold all pay due employees until the strike was settled as a means of putting pressure on the striking employees by the non-striking employees. The loss of the railroad payroll could be felt in varying degrees by the saloons, boarding houses, bordellos, barbershops, laundries, grocery and butcher shops, bakeries, and dairies.

> Hard times were already in the neighborhood, where lived the families of the shopmen who had gone out on strike. Among the small storekeepers, Saxon, in the course of the daily marketing, could sense the air of despondency. Light and geniality seemed to have vanished. . . . The mothers of the children that played in the streets showed the gloom plainly in their faces. When they gossiped in the evenings, over front gates and on door stoops, their voices were subdued and less laughter rang out. Mary Donahue, who had taken three pints from the milkman, now took one pint. . . . Scrap-meat was harder to get from the butcher. Nora Delaney, in the third house, no longer bought fresh fish for Friday. Salted codfish, not of the best quality, was now on her table. Sturdy children that ran out upon the street between meals with huge slices of bread and butter and sugar now came out with no sugar and thinner slices spread more thinly with butter. Everywhere was manifest a pinching and scraping, a tightening and shorting down of expenditure [London 1913:177-178].

Officially, the 1894 strike lasted 13 days, but violence in West Oakland made the headlines nearly a month after it had begun. A longer railroad strike started in September 1911 and still saw violence in West Oakland as late as the April of 1912. This later bitter strike ground on and on, leaving some families destitute. But in both strikes, the cut-off of railroad paychecks pushed working-class families hard.

Most West of Market families operated on barely enough to pay for food and housing from month to month. The butcher and the fruit and vegetable man were willing to extend small amounts of credit to individuals from time to time--three to four dollars at most. With 800 men out on strike in Oakland, and most families just scraping by, few small shopkeepers could afford to give families extended credit.

Part of the effectiveness of the ARU strike in Oakland was due to the widespread, deep antagonism in the Bay Area towards the Southern Pacific. The *Oakland Enquirer* reporters covered every strikers' meeting; wrote up encounters between strikers and the authorities in West

Oakland with full dramatic persona, including many direct quotes; and published detailed accounts of the Ladies' Sympathetic League, including the names of well-known Oakland and Berkeley club women who served as officers. On the first Sunday of the strike, reporters from this paper covered a number of sermons at Oakland churches, publishing lengthy excerpts from text that supported the strike; part of one such sermon appears below:

> Several Oakland ministers referred to the existing labor troubles in their sermons yesterday. Reverend Dr. Coyle . . . "For weary ages the masses were rejected and the builders tried to run up great . . . structures without them. It was taken as a thing of course that they belonged in the rear, and in the rear they were kept. But within our own memories a mighty change has taken place, and it is taking place today . . . the people are rising--blindly perhaps . . . but they are rising. Those who have been hitherto ignored are coming to the front, and in the very nature of things that means upheaval. Much of their conduct we deplore. It cannot be justified--it is lawless . . . nevertheless it is in line with progress" [*Oakland Enquirer,* July 9, 1894].

Effectively, the *Oakland Enquirer* mobilized local public opinion by giving civic importance and respectability to the strikers, who appeared somewhat ambivalent about "kicking the company when it's down." After all, the company, with all its faults, had paid them every month and had the power to destroy them and their families by withholding funds. Consider the great respect shown to Mrs. Leland Stanford when her private car had the bad luck to become stranded in Dunsmuir, a railroad town south of the Oregon border, at the onset of the strike:

> Mrs. Stanford, attired in heavy mourning, accompanied by her maid and the daughter of her brother, Mr. Lathrop . . . alighted and shook the hand of Conductor Brady and said, "I want to thank you all again for your kindness." It appears that the Pullman strike caught Mrs. Stanford stranded in the mountains, far from home. She said, "Boys, my life is your hands. . . . They wanted to bring me through last night, I told them I was pretty tired so I went to the hotel at Willows. The train men had their meals there. I told the hotel keeper I would settle for them, but he replied, 'The men have been provided with every accommodation and left instructions that Mrs. Stanford should be allowed to pay for nothing while at the hotel' . . . . I have given them my word that having brought the train through, the train shall return from whence it came. I should be glad to see this trouble settled" [*Oakland Enquirer*, July 2, 1894].

In the same edition, another article described Mrs. Stanford's journey south:

> When Mrs. Stanford's private car came through, it was greeted with cheers. There was considerable excitement when the train from Tracy came by with one Pullman car and cries of "Cut her off!" One of the excited strikers cried out, "They have played us false! We opened the road out of respect to Stanford's widow, and they are trying to run in a Pullman." After considerable talk, the train got on the pier. . . .There were no passengers on the car. The next train was a local passenger over the southern route, with passenger, mail and baggage cars, also one special operated fruit car. . . . At the

> Sixteenth Street Station where the train stopped, there were some who wanted to stop it. A large number of deputy U.S. marshals and sheriffs were standing by. . . . Several strikers piled upon the platform. . . . A deputy sheriff drew his revolver but a small boy in the crowd dodged under his arm. He threw the deputy marshal's arm aside and uncoupled the car and dodged through and jumped off on the other side, lost in the crowd. . . . The coup was so sudden that it surprised the crowd [*Oakland Enquirer*, July 2, 1894].

For the women in West Oakland the danger of the strike was as immediate and direct as their children's proximity to Seventh Street. Their realistic fears for their families' safety were fanned by newspaper headlines of violence in Houston and Chicago and Sacramento, and by the presence of armed marshals and sheriffs along Seventh Street, on the Point, and at the Pier. Women's concerns were mobilized by enlisting them in the strike itself. Sometimes, women were more determined than the men:

> The wife of one of the A.R.U. men who is on strike is also the sister of an engineer, and recently said to her brother: "I think a good deal of you but if you go out with a scab fireman during this fight I don't want you to ever darken my door again" [*Oakland Enquirer*, July 3, 1894].

And women from Oakland and Berkeley organized:

> The meeting of women whose sympathies are with the strikers at Bartlett Hall yesterday were wives and mothers of the men who are in the employ of the company and others were simply present from motives of sympathetic interest. [There follows a list of women holding offices in various organizations, including WCTU] It was resolved to form a permanent organization to afford aid to the strikers and assist their families if need be . . . . The organization shall be known as the A.R.U. Sympathetic League . . . .It was announced that an artist from a San Francisco newspaper wanted to make a sketch of the meeting, but one of the ladies' exclaimed,"We don't want to make ourselves ridiculous!" The ladies stated that they would hold meetings daily at Bartlett Hall on the corner of Seventh and Pine, where a committee would be present from 1 to 5 p.m. to receive financial or other donations which will be supplied to the relief of families of strikers who may be cut off from income during the strike. There is one month's wages due most of the men and that has been held back by the company on all employees as a guarantee. Should the strike be prolonged there may be demands upon the resources of the society. Several donations were received yesterday before the meeting adjourned [*Oakland Enquirer*, July 6, 1894].

The next day's paper detailed a large enthusiastic union meeting, and ended with:

> At the close of the meeting, the chairman announced that the Ladies Sympathetic League had white bows for sale at the door at ten cents each and he advised each and all present in view of events to take place in Oakland soon, to get on the right side by

buying bows and wearing them. The ladies also would have for sale at the door for 25 cents each, tickets for a benefit to be given by the Railroad Union at the tabernacle next Wednesday evening [*Oakland Enquirer*, July 7, 1894].

The effectiveness of fund-raising for strikers is further attested to below:

> The women of West Oakland and many throughout the city are lending their support to the strikers . . . .The public is kindly requested not to give donations to anyone who has not an order with the official seal of the A.R.U. Sympathetic League. The ladies wish to thank a young lady for her noble donation received by publishing her letter, she gave no name: To Mrs. T.J. Roberts-- "Dear Madam: Enclose please find forty cents to help your cause. I wish I could give more, but I am a poor girl and cannot afford to. What I do give, however, is my average daily wages, and I have to live on that. I think every workingman and woman ought to help you, and it seems strange that the conductors and engineers who get such good wages, do not do so. I shall remember you in my prayers and ask God to be with poor in the time of their distress. May his blessing be with you is the wish of a sincere friend." May she share the blessings she asks for others [*Oakland Enquirer*, July 10, 1894].

Although the anonymous letter (with its effective jab at non-striking conductors and engineers) could have been the creative product from the backroom of a local saloon, forty cents was the daily wage for a girl. The California Jute Mill, "One of the largest corporations operating in Alameda County," which employed about 375 workers, noted that "100 girls earn about forty cents a day, and becoming expert can average $40 a month" (*Oakland Daily Tribune*, January 30, 1887). As late as 1898, Vernon Sappers' father made ten cents an hour as a draftsman, working for the Southern Pacific.

By July 9th, the American Railway Union membership had grown to 1100 members and the officials at their headquarters at Hansen Hall, at the corner of Goss and Wood, on Block 25, had decided to decorate the hall and reserve seats for ladies for their meetings. Meanwhile the Ladies' Sympathetic League (as it came to be called) continued to meet every afternoon at Bartlett Hall, at the corner of Seventh and Pine, also on Block 25. Although the strike was officially over by July 15, the violence along Seventh Street on July 17th brought this sobering response:

> The engineers in the employ of the S.P. are applying at police headquarters by the wholesale for permits to carry firearms. They claim their lives have been threatened by strikers. . . . Their requests are generally granted. . . . Besides the engineers themselves, many of their families have been calling on Chief Schaffer and complaining that their lives have been threatened if they do not induce their relatives to quit work. Some of the women are quite worked up over the matter [*Oakland Enquirer*, July 18, 1894].

Women's activities in the ensuing railroad strikes changed; from passing out white ribbons to raise money in the 1894 strike, to direct participation on picket lines in the next railroad strike in 1911-1912. During this year-long strike, West Oakland again became the focus of much of the violence, provoked by continuous presence of imported scabs, "living in the railroad shop-yards where mass picket lines were thrown up around the barricaded shops in which large numbers of imported strike breakers were housed. For a time women members of strikers' families served as pickets" (Knight 1960:254).

The 1911 System Federation Strike

Following the end of the 1894 ARU strike, organized labor in West Oakland made only slow gains in achieving better pay and working conditions. Individual railway craft unions negotiated separately with the railroad: in 1904 the Machinist's Union peacefully reached an understanding with the railroad that providing for recognition of union shop committees and union apprenticeship rules in the West Oakland shops; in 1910 the blacksmiths successfully negotiated a wage increase of about 25 cents a day (Knight 1960:154).

Except for a few elite job categories, such as senior locomotive engineer, levels of pay on the railroad remained low and working conditions poor throughout the 1890s and 1900s. Census information has revealed that many of the laborers that the railroad employed during this period were recent immigrants from Greece and Portugal; with limited knowledge of English, these men had little opportunity to organize and the subsistence wages they were paid reflected this. Among the more politically sophisticated railroad workers, there was resentment over low pay because the railroad was highly profitable to its owners; it was not that railroad wages had gone down relative to other types of industrial employment, but that the workers' expectations had risen along with the increasing prosperity of the middle class.

In the first decade of the 20th century, the Southern Pacific came under the control of financier Edward Harriman, who ruled the railroad with the same autocratic ruthlessness that had been the principal characteristic of Charles Crocker and Collis Huntington. Harriman invested immense sums in capital improvements to the line, including the electrification of the East Bay suburban service in 1909-1911; he spent only what he had to on his employees' wages. Vernon Sappers recalls how his father felt about working for the railroad in West Oakland in the first two decades of this century:

> My father started working for the railroad in 1898, so he didn't see the earlier strike. But there was another strike and he told me that there was quite a bit of violence attached to it. There were shootings--I don't know if anybody was hurt. The one man the strikers were trying to target was the master mechanic. He was in charge of the shops and he represented the railroad. He was always a very powerful, a very influential person. My father was a union man, and he certainly had no love of the company, but he always did his work and did it well.

He began working as a junior draftsmen in the car shop at 10 cents an hour, six days a week. It was miserable pay, and he had to work nights and Sundays as a carpenter. He was a most skilled cabinet maker, and a good thing it was, too. Many of the railway workers also did other work to make ends meet. My mother worked when they were first married as a seamstress.

There was a famous sash and door place on Wood Street--California Sash and Door. They used the Bidot System for watching workers and constantly increasing the piecework--it was a real sweatshop, a horrible place where men worked themselves to death. I remember my dad pointing it out to me and berating the Bidot System as the worst enemy of the working man.

There were a great many injuries among the railroad workers. The Southern Pacific had a hospital down there and it came in handy for men who were critically injured. Men were especially prone to losing limbs. I remember one gentleman who lost an arm. Another friend of my father's had lost a leg. He was Portuguese, and had a cork leg that squeaked when he straightened it to get up out of his chair. When men were maimed the railroad would pay only a measly amount as compensation. But the man's family wouldn't be completely ruined. What the railroad would do is to assign a man who lost an arm or leg to work as a flagman at a crossing--back in the early twenties I remember many flagmen who limped or had a wooden leg or were missing an arm. But work as a flagman didn't pay nearly as much as an engineer or mechanic--it didn't pay much at all. It was cheaper for the railroad than putting in automatic crossing gates.

It was not till later that the railroad paid better compensation. In 1940, a friend of my father's who was working as a brakeman out of West Oakland lost his leg and got a ten thousand dollar settlement. He went into business in a hardware store, which grew into chain called Orchard Supply Hardware. Now he is very wealthy and lives on an estate at Stanton down on the coast. He lives very privately, and has his own miniature steam railway there just for himself [Vernon Sappers/Olmsted interview, April 20, 1993].

The last violent conflict in West Oakland between the railroad and its workers occurred in 1911 and 1912, with a grueling strike of machinists and shop workers that marked the defeat of the socialist wing of the railway labor movement. Knight describes the central issues of the machinists strike as a heritage of the 1894 ARU strike:

In June, 1911, unions of machinists and other skilled metal tradesmen organized a system federation embracing repair shop craftsmen employed by the Southern Pacific Railroad. . . . The new federation was headed by E. L. Reguin, a San Francisco machinist and ardent socialist. It was a major step toward interunion coordination, for its purpose was to win from the Harriman lines a system-wide contract which would replace the separate contracts, with separate expiration dates, negotiated by individual crafts. The officers of the Harriman lines were determined to block this movement towards an all-inclusive bargaining unit, although they had for some years bargained peacefully with individual metal trades unions. Railroad executives feared that the movement among the shop craftsmen might open the way for an eventual nation-wide federation with the power to call a strike crippling every railroad in the country. In

> their view the shop federation embodied the same disturbing philosophy of industrial unionism which had been exemplified in the 1890s by Eugene Debs's American Railway Union [1960:253]

Negotiations continued throughout the summer of 1911, with the machinists' union putting forth a series of demands that, had the railroad accepted them, would have left the union in effective control of the railway shops. The railroad, rather than accept the principle of dealing with one large union--the System Federation--was prepared to endure a strike, confident that it could continue operations. The railway posted notices in the West Oakland shops warning that men going on strike would forfeit pension rights and that no striker over 35 would be rehired.

Although the machinists' union leaders were ideological socialists, the rank-and-file members were more directly concerned about the petty tyranny that the railroad exerted over their lives; union demands for control over working conditions in the shops was a key demand because of the railroad's chicanery. A case in point was the attempt to single out older workers with the threat of an age cutoff in rehiring, should the union lose. To the union organizers, the paternalistic efforts of the railroad were really a way of keeping a close control over the railway workers' lives. The leader of the union, E. L. Reguin, explained on September 29 what the railroad's benevolence meant to those who had to accept it:

> Mr. Kruttschnitt [the railroad president] has told the public a lot of nonsense about his benevolence towards the employees. He has not told how much the cost of the pension system is borne by the hospital fund, which the men contribute. He has failed to explain that the physical examination is a means of operating the blacklist so that a man is absolutely at his mercy. He has failed to tell the public that he is denying the right of being represented by our own officials in negotiating a wage scale. That is the issue that us brought us to the fighting point [*Oakland Tribune*, September 30, 1911].

The strike began the next day, involving more than 800 workers in Oakland and thousands elsewhere on the Southern Pacific and the other railways that formed Harriman's empire. Initially, the union leaders predicted that they would win after only a few days, as steam locomotives required intensive maintenance to operate safely. In West Oakland, the union had funds sufficient to keep the workers and their families going for two months, which seemed a generous estimate.

But the railroad was not caught unprepared, as it had been during the 1894 strike. This time, there was no opportunity for the strikers to seize control of the shop complex; instead, the railroad quickly moved to turn it into a well-armed fortress. Very few of the shop workers did not join the strike--the union claimed that only three machinists, three blacksmiths, and three blacksmiths' helpers stayed in the yards when the strike order was issued, while all of the boilermakers joined the walk out (*Oakland Enquirer*, October 4, 1911). The railroad responded by recruiting non-union machinists as strikebreakers, who were housed in the West Oakland shops where they worked to try to keep the engines and cars in working order:

> Work in the machine shops was started yesterday, and it is stated that 131 mechanics have been secured to take the places of those who walked out on Saturday morning. Accommodation for 500 men have been provided, and the majority of those now at work are lodged in the old paint shop. Here cots have been placed and the entire building has the appearance of a huge barracks. . . . Other buildings are provided with cots, blankets, and mattresses, and still further supplies are waiting to be unloaded from the car. A good table is set for the strikebreakers, and means possible to provide for the comfort of the men taken.
>
> Both sides of the controversy have settled down to a long-drawn-out siege. There are about 130 guards on duty in the West Oakland yards and a launch, with an armed guard aboard, is patrolling the bay side of the yards, which is unprotected by the barbwire surmounted an electrified fence that surrounds the other sides. While not anticipating any trouble from the strikers, it is believed that a small arsenal has been established within the yards, and the company is prepared to meet any trouble that may arise [*Oakland Enquirer*, October 4, 1911].

Housing the strikebreakers in the shops was unavoidable, given the animosity that the railroad's threats had engendered in the strikers. Even with this precaution, some strikebreakers who were unwise enough to venture out into the West Oakland streets met a hostile reception--on October 5, Frank Carpenter, a non-union machinists, was severely beaten by four strikers at the corner of Seventh and Center streets (*Oakland Enquirer*, October 6, 1911). Elsewhere on the Harriman lines, violence was more brutal; already on October 3 in Houston, one man had been killed and several wounded during an exchange of gunfire.

Meanwhile, the railroad tried various ways of luring enough strikers to return to work to keep the engines running and, just as important, damage the morale of the union men. Boilerwashers, immediately needed to keep the oil-burning engines in running order, were offered a 25-cent-a-day raise to return to work; the union denied that any had accepted this generous offer. Company agents made surreptitious forays into West Oakland to win back the labor of those thought most vulnerable to persuasion, as the *Oakland Enquirer* reported on October 3: "Jack Muir, a clerk in the employ of the company, according to the statements of some of the apprentices whose homes he visited, spent yesterday in trying to induce the parents of the boys to force the lads to return to work. He was successful in one instance, and the boy returned only to quit later in the day."

As the strike wore on, the railroad succeeded in recruiting enough machinists to keep its trains running. A major disappointment to the System Federation was the failure of other railway unions, notably the switchmen, to join in the walkout. The leaders of the strike realized that the railway would be able to hold out unless the strikers were joined by railway workers who were not members of the System Federation:

> Urging the men to stand together and stating the lack of cooperation between the strikers and the unskilled yard employees was responsible for the failure to bring the Southern Pacific company to time, was the tenor of several addresses made by local

> labor leaders at a mass meeting held yesterday afternoon by the striking shop employees of the railroad. The meeting was held at the headquarters of the Oakland branch of the shop federation, Eighth and Pine streets. Several socialist leaders as well as the labor men spoke [*Oakland Enquirer*, October 16, 1911].

The situation remained tense in West Oakland for months. The strike fueled tension between the System Federation members, and the members of other unions, such as the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, who refused to become involved:

> For a time women members of strikers' families served as pickets. The strike soon turned into an endurance contest, punctuated by incidents of violence. According to union spokesmen, more than 200 strikers were arrested in Oakland in connection with picketing and clashes with S.P. employees. In April, 1912, more than six months after the conflict had begun, an Oakland unionist was fatally injured in a picket line battle among strikers, strikebreakers, and armed guards.
>
> Oakland socialists, who were always opposed to separation of workers by craft lines, were extremely interested in the federation's fight for a form of modified industrial unionism. They denounced the railroad brotherhoods for failing to strike in sympathy with the shopmen, and called for one big industrial union of all railroad employees. Early in 1912, E. L. Reguin, socialist leader of the System Federation, issued an appeal for a nationwide shopmen's strike . . . but by mid-1912 the Harriman lines had recruited enough competent metal tradesmen to keep the repair shops operating, and the strike had lost all force. Soon thereafter the System Federation was abandoned, and a notable attempt to established interunion solidarity in collective bargaining was abandoned [Knight 1960:254].

The collapse of the strike meant the end of efforts to unionize West Oakland railway workers across traditional craft lines; after 1912, the railway unions, alienated from one another by the bitterness that the strike had engendered, concentrated their efforts on achieving incremental wage gains within each craft. As late as the 1930s, railway wages for many jobs remained near their 1912 levels (Vernon Sappers/Olmsted interview, April 16, 1993).

THE PATTERNS OF A GROWING COMMUNITY

On the 1870 Snow & Roos bird's-eye view, the beginnings of West Oakland as an industrial boomtown are depicted as a spatially dispersed community, with only a cluster of houses at Oakland Point suggesting the density of development that would come to characterize the entire district over the following three decades. As Oakland as a whole began a phase of rapid growth during the 1870s, this dispersal grew: the compact township shown on the 1857 Coast Survey Map evolved into an irregularly sprawling suburb--a pattern of development that would continue until Oakland itself was left behind in the wake of rapid suburban expansion in the years following World War II.

The decade of the 1870s, in particular, was a period of very rapid growth, with speculative development gathering momentum in response to the stimulus that the railroad brought to the local economy as it expanded its operations. The result was a real-estate boom in the years 1874 to 1876. During this same period, San Francisco was suffering a slump which was also related to the arrival of the railroad. As Scott notes:

> Only a few months after the first overland train completed its historic run, San Franciscans began to realize that the transcontinental rails were no unmixed blessing to their city. The Pacific railroad permitted eastern concerns, especially those in Chicago, to sell their products in areas theretofore served exclusively by the western metropolis. It carried East many products formerly shipped to the Atlantic seaboard from the wharves of San Francisco. Business at the port declined [1959:57].

What had happened is that the railroad had brought about a changing balance in investment and construction away from San Francisco and towards Oakland; its effects were disproportionately felt in Oakland because the town was so small relative to San Francisco in 1870. Oakland newspapers were quick to note the favorable effects of the arrival of the transcontinental. The *Oakland Daily Transcript* remarked on April 18, 1870, that, "One only need take a walk or drive around and about Oakland, outside of the principal streets, to be perfectly astounded at the immense number of buildings in course of construction on every hand." With the railroad bringing in hundreds of new workers who needed housing, rents were rising and scores of applicants for houses to rent were being turned away daily from real estate offices (Scott 1959:57). Railway workers had an especial need of housing in West Oakland, because railway rules required some workers to live west of Adeline Street, so that they might be always on call --a category that would have included a larger proportion of operating employees, such as engineers and conductors, and a smaller number of shop employees.

The construction of extensive railroad shops in 1873 and 1874 occasioned a new spurt of development in West Oakland, leading the *Oakland News* to comment that:

> The Point has taken a start that is somewhat astounding, and many will be surprised to be told that it is now really the most prosperous part of Oakland. New hotels, new houses, new business places are being built and started and seem to have encouraging success. The main cause of prosperity down there, however, is the location of the railroad workshops, to which is now being added the railroad company's shipyard. The workmen mostly employed there are white men and spend the greater part of their wages on the spot. We suppose that within a twelve month no less than twenty business places have been opened at the Point and all appear to be doing well
>
> Besides the Railroad Company, the Point has an energetic promoter of its prosperity in Mr. John W. Pearson, of the Pacific Lumber and Mill Co., San Francisco. In 1872, Mr. Pearson erected a large livery stable known as the Stanford Stables, which has a large run of patronage. He also furnished the citizens with a place of amusement, consisting of a large hall for skating, dancing, etc., over the stables. Mr. P. believes in the Point, and continues to largely identify himself with its prosperity, and started in this year with the determination of tenanting his end of the city. He proposed to himself to build this year no less than one hundred houses, and has already built a good many of them, which are now occupied by tenants. A few days ago he started in to build thirty more, and these are now being pushed forward as rapidly as the scarcity of house carpenters will allow [June 27, 1874].

Many of the new residents of Oakland were commuters; between 1873 and 1877 the number of passengers on ferries between Oakland and San Francisco doubled, increasing from 2,655,671 to 5,570,555 annually (Scott 1959:66). In West Oakland the boom of the mid-1870s gave large property owners their first opportunity to reap the rewards of earlier investments in the land itself and the Seventh Street railway. As a result, during the last three decades of the 19th century, West Oakland was the fastest-growing section of the entire city. In a practice common at the time, and particularly characteristic of land speculations in the 1870s, some of these tracts were subdivided into small house lots, which were then sold at auction. Contemporary accounts recorded these auctions as among the principal events of the year in their chronicles:

> The famous Gibbons tracts of land--two--were advertised to be sold at auction at Stanford Hall on February 13th, 1875. This was one of the most important sales of homestead lots ever conducted in Oakland. The larger tract was bounded south by the Central Pacific railroad lands and embraced about sixty acres and contained the company's shipyard where two large steamers were on the way south. The tract was bounded north by the Casserly tract, on the east by Peralta street, which extended from Oakland Harbor to the State University. The smaller tract was bounded south by Division street (extension of Eighth) and bordered on the bay with waterfront privileges . . . $81,375 was reaped. Lots on Railroad Avenue [Seventh Street] brought from $550 to $1350. On other streets the prices ranged from $350 to $500. A total of 197 lots were sold. Lots were sold in blocks 466, 499, 498, 501,502, 526 and others [Baker 1914:379].

The Gibbons tract was only one of several large tracts in West Oakland developed during the property boom of the 1870s. The Bayview Homestead, immediately across Peralta Street east of the Gibbons Tract, had been subdivided in 1869; its southern end included parts of Blocks 16 and 17. The Bridges Tract, west of Adeline, included Blocks 9, 10, 11, and 14. Interspersed between these subdivisions were tracts of land that remained undeveloped, often because they were low lying and marshy, and in the hands of large land owners, such as the Contra Costa Laundry Association, owner of Blocks 7 and 8. Several large private estates, such as that of Charles McDermott, on the entire blocks of Seventh between Eighth, Cypress, and Center streets, also remained intact--the McDermott estate would remain unaltered until 1942.

The success of the Gibbons Tract sale shows the demand following the construction of the transcontinental terminus for cheap West Oakland homesites. The descriptions of the lots as "homestead lots" echoed the common practice of the time for speculators to acquire large tracts of outlying land for subdivision and sale on credit to workingmen who could not otherwise afford to buy real estate. In San Francisco in the 1870s, lots could be bought for 25 dollars in gold as a downpayment, with ten dollars in gold a month thereafter. The terminology Baker used to describe the sale of the Gibbons Tract implied the working-class character of the buyers and the subsequent neighborhood. As in homestead tracts in San Francisco, lots were very small, and except for the more valuable potential commercial property along Seventh Street, prices were likewise within a narrow range. It is likely that many if not most of the lots were sold on credit; this was also a typical feature of land auctions, allowing buyers to bid up prices, in the hope that a continued property boom would give them speculative profits, too, with relatively little money up front.

Lots were sold on the installment plan in a number of tracts in Oakland, with real estate agents offering lots in more than one tract at the same time. Six years after the Bayview Tract was subdivided, lots were being advertised for $325 each, with payments of from 15 to 20 dollars a month and 25 to 50 dollars down (*Oakland Daily News*, March 5, 1875). When lots were disposed of in a single auction, such as those in the Gibbons Tract, purchasers might have to wait until they had enough money to build a house. Many of the lot owners waited at least several months before constructing houses. In April of 1875, three months after the auction, 33 new buildings were going up in West Oakland, including the Gibbons Tract--a number of building starts which was large enough to be noted as exceptional in Baker's chronicle, but which was small compared to the 197 lots sold in the Gibbons Tract auction alone (Baker 1914:380). The pace of growth continued into 1876, and "in one week late in February 1876 fourteen families came from San Francisco and became residents of West Oakland. It was said that the fogs of the mornings and the wind and dust of the evenings in San Francisco were too much for them" (Baker 1914:383).

Many of the new homeowners doubtless worked for the railroad, but there were now other industries in West Oakland that paid wages sufficient to buy a building lot in the project area.

Shipbuilding, for example, was rapidly expanding in association with the railroad and its need for ever-increasing numbers of ferries, so that by "November [1874] there were employed at the West Oakland shipyard, ship carpenters, 70, laborers, 50, machinists 25, pile drivers, 10, dredgers, 10" (Halley 1876:374). Ships' carpenters and machinists typically earned several dollars a day at the time, and this was enough to make the payments on a lot.

Carpenters, in particular, were well-placed to buy cheap building lots. Even if they worked for wages, in their spare time they could build a house to sell or rent, having only the costs of lumber, nails, and fixtures to meet. The Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey of surviving houses on Blocks 24 and 28 show an unusual number of carpenters as owner-builders of houses, sometimes on adjacent lots.

The new residents, as well as workers at the railroad and other industries who lived elsewhere, created the need for shops and services, which were almost entirely located along Seventh Street. Whereas before the railroad there was only a small a number of shops clustered around Seventh and Pine:

> In 1877 there were 75 business establishments between Center Street and the bay at West Oakland: 2 drug stores, 3 restaurants, 14 saloons, 8 groceries, 2 stationery stores, 3 barber shops, 5 cigar shops, 1 harness store, 4 plumber shops, 1 tailor shop, 2 bakeries, 6 butcher shops, 5 shoemaker shops, 4 fruit stores, 1 hardware store, 1 furniture store, 5 dry goods stores, 1 watchmaker, 2 real estate offices, 1 clothing store, 2 coal yards, 1 art gallery, 1 paint shop, 1 livery stable and others [Baker 1914:386].

The list is instructive in its distribution of types of businesses; many of the more numerous categories of businesses, such as saloons, cigar shops, and shoemaker's shops, would have had a larger clientele than the residents of the immediate neighborhood, including railway workers who lived elsewhere but had an immediate need for tobacco, drink, work clothes, and meals. As late as the 1930s, Frisch's cigar store at Seventh and Pine sold overalls, caps, pens, notebooks, and other occupational necessities to railroad workers. But local residents must have provided the bulk of the patronage for the several groceries, fruit stores, butcher shops, drug stores, and bakeries, and the presence of competing shops in each category on Baker's list shows the extent to which West Oakland residents could do much of their business without having to venture downtown. Other goods were sold door to door; many families in 1875 were "served by 100 to 150 Chinamen daily who came with fresh fruits and vegetables from San Francisco on the seven and 7:30 [A.M.] ferries" (Baker 1914:374).

The overall picture of West Oakland in the 1870s and 1880s that emerges from archival sources is of a rapidly growing and prosperous community. The pattern of growth was shaped by the expanding presence of the railroad, against a background of real-estate subdivision and small-scale building that reflected the largely working-class population that the railroad employed directly and supported indirectly. Growth was characterized by private, not public,

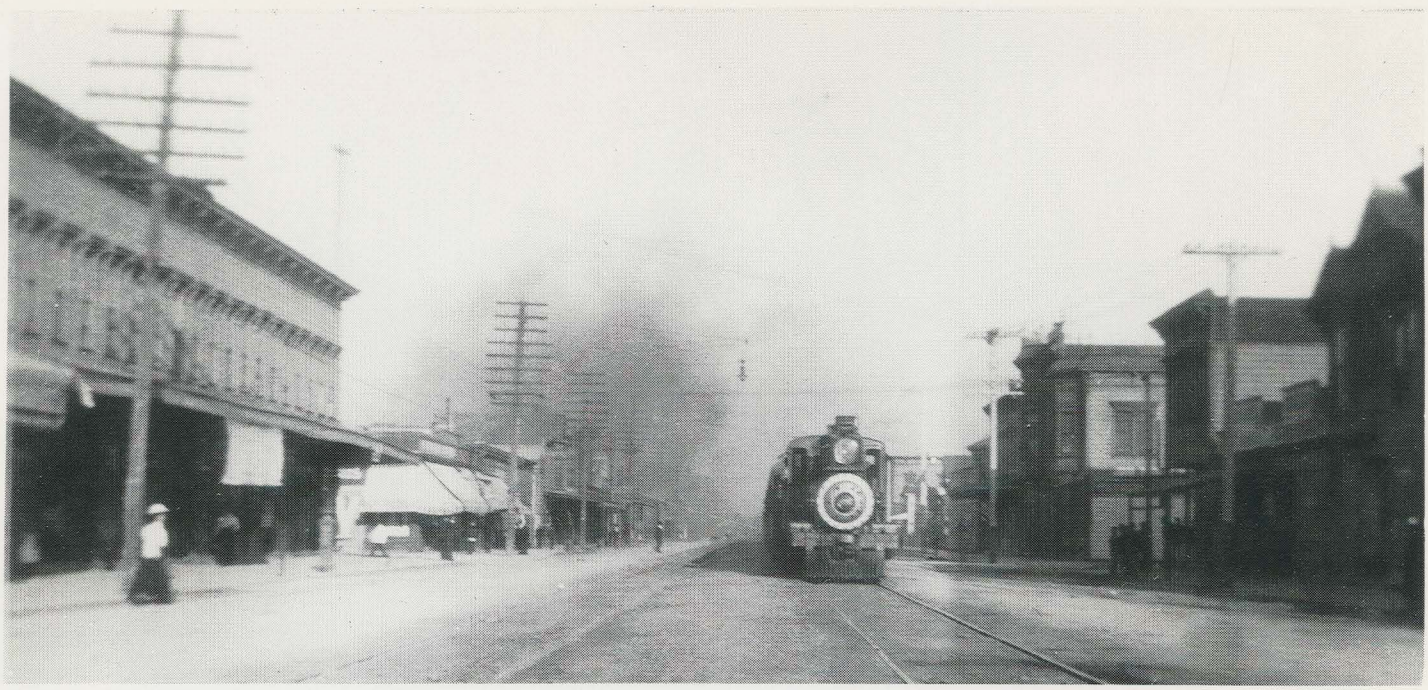


Plate 29: Looking East on Seventh Street, Mid-block from Pine towards Wood Street, circa 1900 . . . The woman on the left is walking past the James Block on Block 25. The Pullman Hotel was upstairs, and a slanted awning protected the dimly seen sidewalk strollers. Across the street, on Block 23, a group of men stand in the shadows at the entrance to the saloon. *(Courtesy of the Bancroft Library)*

Plate 30: East on Seventh Street near Pine in 1940 . . . The owl-eyed electric train with its spider webs of overhead wiring has replaced the steam train with its cloud of soot and cinders. Planked sidewalks, "where the rats played friendly as kittens," are now cement, paid for by the railroad. Nineteenth-century tin and wooden awnings are no more. Storefronts have been modernized with floor-to-ceiling plate glass to display merchandise and let in light. Above the street level, the original architecture remains: here are rows of narrow casement windows with their decorative cornices and scrolled brackets supporting narrow eaves. If the ladies on the left had looked up (instead of at the camera) they would have seen the 1873 facade that the woman with the longer skirt swept by in 1900. *(From the collection of Vernon J. Sappers)*

initiatives--even institutions such as schools had their West Oakland origins in collective, privately organized community efforts. West Oakland residents had their own locally based civil society, especially in churches and fraternal orders, and later unions that often had Masonic overtones. From as early as the 1870s, West Oaklanders had a great deal of purely local pride in the rapid growth of their community; in 1875, the Oakland *News* jokingly commented how Oakland Point residents bragged that "they have the two largest vegetable gardens; the largest laundry; the biggest windmill, the only shipyard, the most waterfront, the greatest number of prospective railroads, the shortest distance to the city of San Francisco" (May 20, 1875, quoted in Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey 1990 [2]:40).

Politically, West Oakland comprised the First Ward of the municipality, and numerous sources attest to the importance of the First Ward vote in local politics. What is left unsaid in the historical record is how little West Oakland received back from local government in terms of public improvements--a pattern that paralleled South of Market San Francisco. Although West Oaklanders were represented in government, most real power in Oakland was held by business and real-estate interests. And public money was spent where men of influence wanted it spent. Oakland's public achievements--its parks, paved streets, and fine buildings--although paid for, in part, by the taxes of West Oakland residents, were not to be found in West Oakland. Significantly, the first major public investment in West Oakland outside of schools and fire stations was the Peralta-Village public housing complex planned in the late-1930s. And that was paid for with federal monies, not city funds, as were the West Oakland redevelopment projects of the 1960s and 1970s.

Problems of Growth

The failure of public investment in civic amenities in West Oakland to keep pace with private development had both immediate and long-term consequences for the community that have not been the subject of historical inquiry. West Oakland was far from unique in this respect; throughout California, and continuing through the present day, a cycle of rapid development followed by slow decay can be observed in many communities, especially in suburbs that sprang up, like West Oakland, to serve a single industry.

In its simplest terms, the problem is a financial one: in a slowly growing town, public improvements can be built and paid for at a pace that keeps up with growth without overwhelming cost; in a rapidly growing area, costly infrastructure is needed quickly, while the tax base that can support public expenditures is fragile. This historical California pattern, now of central concern to urban planners and of increasing interest to urban historians, was first described in detail by Mel Scott in 1959 in *The San Francisco Bay Area: A Metropolis in Perspective.* Scott's prime examples of this phenomenon are wartime communities, such as Richmond and Vallejo, where small towns were immensely inflated by temporary government-

sponsored industrial and population booms. But West Oakland is an important prototype of this phenomenon in a broader sense, because the problems of growth came about through private initiative, with a notable lack of government involvement.

One basic way in which the problems of growth in West Oakland are prototypical is in a leapfrog pattern of subdivision and development, following the completion of the local railway in 1863. This was a pattern of development that was novel in California at the time; San Francisco developed directly outwards from its original waterfront urban nucleus during the 1850s and 1860s, following the older spatial order of pedestrian and equestrian traffic. Indeed, the San Francisco and Oakland Railway was, at the time of its completion, the first railway in California to be conceived of and built as a commuter railroad that would increase the value of the property adjoining it, much of it owned by the railway promoters.

As a result, the rapid subdivision and extensive building in West Oakland in the mid-1870s did not extend westwards from the existing town; instead, it leapfrogged over intervening blocks and was concentrated west of Center Street and mostly south of Seventh. The patchwork of blocks that resulted was typical of how Oakland as a whole would be developed in succeeding decades. This meant that urban amenities, such as water, sewer, and gas lines, together with all the infrastructure of schools, police and fire stations, parks and street lights, had to be expensively expanded. Throughout the last three decades of the 19th century, Oakland's city government struggled to make needed infrastructure investment, yet as the city continued to grow rapidly throughout this period, investment could never keep pace with growth. In boosting their city so successfully, Oakland property owners unknowingly created nearly intractable problems that would persist for decades. It was in West Oakland that these problems were most marked, and that city investment was smallest.

Despite the desire of Oakland boosters to promote the image of a clean, healthful city, the reality was far different. Sewage from central Oakland filled Lake Merritt and poured into the San Antonio Estuary; siltation progressively impeded tidal cleansing. Closer to the bay, West Oakland should have been healthier, but in the late 1870s a major trunk sewer, designed to empty the cesspool that Lake Merritt had become, was built under Twentieth Street leading outwards to the bay. Bay currents carried its discharge south to Oakland Point, so that successive tides deposited a stinking bed of sewage on the mudflats around the Southern Pacific pier. Instead of an inviting space, the bayshore at Oakland Point became a place people shunned. Instead of residences, the filled-in tidelands could only be used for industries; often these produced their own odors strong enough to mask the aroma of the mudflats.

In West Oakland itself, sewers and water lines were only slowly built; residences and businesses frequently relied on wells for their water supply. The result was, predictably, a continuing series of epidemics, particularly of typhoid, although cholera was not unknown. "Smallpox was epidemic in July, 1868 in Oakland. . . . In February and March, 1875, there were scores of cases of typhoid fever or typhoid pneumonia in Oakland and it seemed almost

epidemic . . . caused by bad water, drought" (Baker 1914:145). The causes of typhoid were uncertain; in the 1875 epidemic, the Board of Health Officer, Dr. Sherman, blamed "exhalations of the body," and commented that "much was caused from passages of patients in the vicinity where the cases of typhoid occurred . . . water was used from wells in marshy soil" (*Oakland Daily News*, March 5, 1875).

Marshes and low-lying areas were considered to be breeding grounds of pestilence throughout the 19th century. In Oakland, the typhoid epidemic of 1875 was thought by some to result from "miasmatic substances arising from the flats" (*Daily Evening Tribune*, March 4, 1875). The proximity of such miasmas could influence settlement patterns. This may well have been the case in West Oakland, where larger middle-class houses were located a safe distance away from marshy areas. Thus the Bayview Tract, bordering the marsh on two sides, was developed from the start as working-class housing; and the low-lying and marshy Blocks 7 and 8 were likewise bounded by working-class housing, with middle-class residences at least one if not two blocks removed from the swamp. Middle-class reluctance to live near miasmas may have helped those areas develop as working-class neighborhoods.

An idea of the extent of the problem, and the public perception of disease, can be found in the Oakland mortality tables for 1877 included in the *Historic Atlas of Alameda County*. At the top of the list, a number of causes of death--including cholera, croup, diphtheria, dysentery, diarrhea, malarial fever, scarlet fever, and septicemia--are grouped together under the general heading of "miasmatic" diseases. Indeed, miasmatic diseases lead in the total cases of death, with 143 out of 537 deaths attributed to the baneful influences of miasmas (Thompson and West 1878:20). Other leading causes of death in 1877 reflected crowded living conditions; tuberculosis, for example, was second only to miasmatic diseases in its toll of victims, claiming 75 lives. By contrast, only 10 persons are listed as having died from old age, 26 from heart diseases, and a solitary man from homicide: Oakland was a young city, with many children and few old people. As a result, Oakland's overall death rate was actually quite low, at about 13 per 1,000, but only because the effects of disease were offset by the paucity of the aged.

Beyond the general middle-class concern over miasmas, Oakland physicians tried to get a clearer, more specific view of the causes of the epidemics. By the late 1880s, medical theories of miasmatic influences had turned away from exhalations from the marshes to water-borne agents. The question of whether the health problems were caused by bad drinking water or by poor sewerage then became a lively issue among local doctors. Some, led by Doctor Pardee, thought that disease was due to a contaminated water supply:

> In December, 1889, Dr. George Pardee made an elaborate report on the quality of the water furnished by the Contra Costa Company. He said that the water was vile, that it was swarming with the rotting remains of animal and vegetable life, that a poorly-sewered, well filtered ward was not as unhealthy as a well-sewered, poorly-filtered ward [Baker 1914:148].

Others, such as Dr. Dunn, saw in poor sewers the main cause of the epidemics:

> The greatest menace to the public health is the sewage draining into and the garbage dumped upon the West Oakland marsh. The next greatest fault of our sanitary condition is the sewage deposited along the marshes and shores of our southern waterfront . . . [*Oakland Board of Health Report*, February 1892, quoted in Baker 1914:151]

A fierce dispute erupted between Dunn and Pardee over whether sewers or impure drinking water was the main cause of disease (Baker 1914:151). For West Oakland residents, it was an academic debate in the practical sense that both sewer and water mains lagged behind much of the more solidly middle-class sections of the city. In the meantime, local doctors struggled heroically to contain the epidemics, but every year scores, if not hundreds, died. Children were especially susceptible, and there were a great many children in West Oakland--most living in crowded conditions. There were no parks, and the only open play-spaces for the children were the streets, and the mudflats and remnants of the estuary channels that remained here and there, especially on the blocks bounded by Seventh, Third, Center, and Kirkham. Since these were also used as convenient dumping grounds for garbage, the fond recollections of boyhood swims in local ponds found in the *West of Market Boys' Journal* in the 1930s are the product of survivors' luck and healthy constitutions.

Periodic epidemics occurred for years, well into the 1890s, at the same time that Oakland promoters were advertising the city as especially healthful:

> In June and July 1893 another epidemic of Typhoid. From June 1 to July 4,341 cases were reported. One of the worst features of the case was the studied attempt to conceal the truth and to misrepresent and deceive so that outsiders would not be prevented from coming here by reason of the dangerous sanitary conditions [Baker 1914:152].

Water-borne diseases were only one aspect of the public health problems of West Oakland. Working conditions in local factories, such as California Sash and Door, were often abysmal, and operating jobs on the railroad carried the constant and almost routine risk of severed limbs. In 1877, for example, of the 23 accidental deaths in Oakland, 6 were railway fatalities, including two pedestrians run over by trains and four railway workers killed in the course of day-to-day operations (Thompson and West 1878:20). The number of maimings on the railway is not recorded, but was high enough that mere loss of fingers was not accounted a major incident. The primitive link-and-pin couplers used up through the 1890s (although the more expensive safety couplers had been invented much earlier) took off many a man's fingers, and it was a common sight to see veteran brakemen missing several digits.

More generally, a constant pall of smoke and soot from the railway engines and local industries, as well as from domestic fireplaces, hung over Oakland Point. As late as the 1920s,

West Oakland was known for the dingy cloud of smoke that hung above it. Vernon Sappers recalls:

> A big cloud of smoke sat over West Oakland; I would see it from the front porch of my house in East Oakland when I looked out over the bay. A big black cloud. Down at Pine and Seventh, the dominant smell was oil smoke--the smell of the big, oil burning locomotives--a distinctive train smell. When the wind was from the north, there would be the smell of the sewage coming from the mudflats off the Sixteenth Street Station. But always the oil smoke. The West Oakland Dinge, my father called it. And because of the Dinge, people painted their houses gray, that particular West Oakland gray. It was the most practical thing to do, and anyway, no matter what color you painted your house, it would turn gray from the smoke. There weren't any white houses in West Oakland.
>
> After the Seventh Street Line was electrified there may have been less smoke right along Seventh, but with the mainline trains still steam oil-burners, the roundhouse and all the industries, the oil smoke hung over the whole of West Oakland. Except out at the Oakland Pier--the pier smelled like creosote, always a clean smell to me. And with the creosote you would smell the salt-water air. People liked to go out to the pier, even if they weren't taking the ferry to the city [Vernon Sappers/Olmsted interview, April 3, 1993].

None of these public-health problems was unique to West Oakland, but their combination in one location was rare in late 19th-century California, with the exception of Tar Flat and a few other sections of the South of Market District of San Francisco. Many were the direct result of the unrestricted quest for private gain--the railroad, for example, produced much of the smoke that turned West Oakland gray with soot, yet operated under the most minimal public regulation. Even where the railroad's operations were supposedly regulated for the public good, Collis Huntington's political henchmen usually decided how any regulations would be enforced. And yet the railroad paid property taxes to the City of Oakland, taxes that might have been invested in making the areas most directly affected by the railroad's operations better places to live. But not until the first decade of the 20th century would the West Oakland Improvement Association develop the political clout to make the railroad give something back to the community that made its Bay Area operations possible.

In the meantime, West Oakland was left with smoke and bad water, sewers that brought to it the effluent of middle-class parts of the city, unpaved streets, and no public parks. As the generation that was born and grew up West of Market came to maturity, many would make their way elsewhere.

A COMMUNITY OF IMMIGRANTS (1880-1910)

"Oakland is just a place to start from . . ."

This was the key insight voiced by Jack London's central character in *Valley of the Moon,* written in 1913 and containing many of the author's mature reflections on his own life. At some point in his life, London must have looked beyond West Oakland, where he had lived and worked as a boy and young man, and realized along with so many other working-class youths that Oakland was a place to get a start before moving on to a better life. There could not be a better expression of the motivating philosophy of the immigrant community that made up much of West Oakland's working class from 1880 through the 1920s.

For a foothold in the United States, California had much to offer--just as it held a strong appeal for Americans stranded in the poverty of the South, for farmers in New England and the Midwest who were barely making a living in the summers, even as they endured the harsh winters. The opening of the transcontinental railroad meant that, by late 1871, emigrant fares from New York to San Francisco had fallen to 60 dollars. Such fares were for travel in freight trains that took seven days from Omaha. In 1870, 44% of arrivals in California came by rail, 56% by sea. In 1871 only 23% came by sea, and the rest by rail (Burchell 1980:36-37). Relatively cheap transportation brought waves of immigrants to the American West, to California, and to Oakland.

Some of those who arrived in California had already made their first monumental move, leaving behind their homelands, and in many cases, their language and their culture, for the hope of making a better life in this new country. But certainly the largest number of new Californians were Americans--from every walk of life--attracted by the descriptions of golden possibilities for a fresh start and a better life. Books and periodicals extolling California quickly became best sellers. Typical of the times was the popular East Coast publication, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Weekly,* which began a year-long series of heavily illustrated articles on railroad travel through the American West in 1876. Beyond the published accounts were letters from California to relatives and friends left behind, exclaiming over the long growing season, the benign climate, healthy living conditions, and above all else, better economic opportunities.

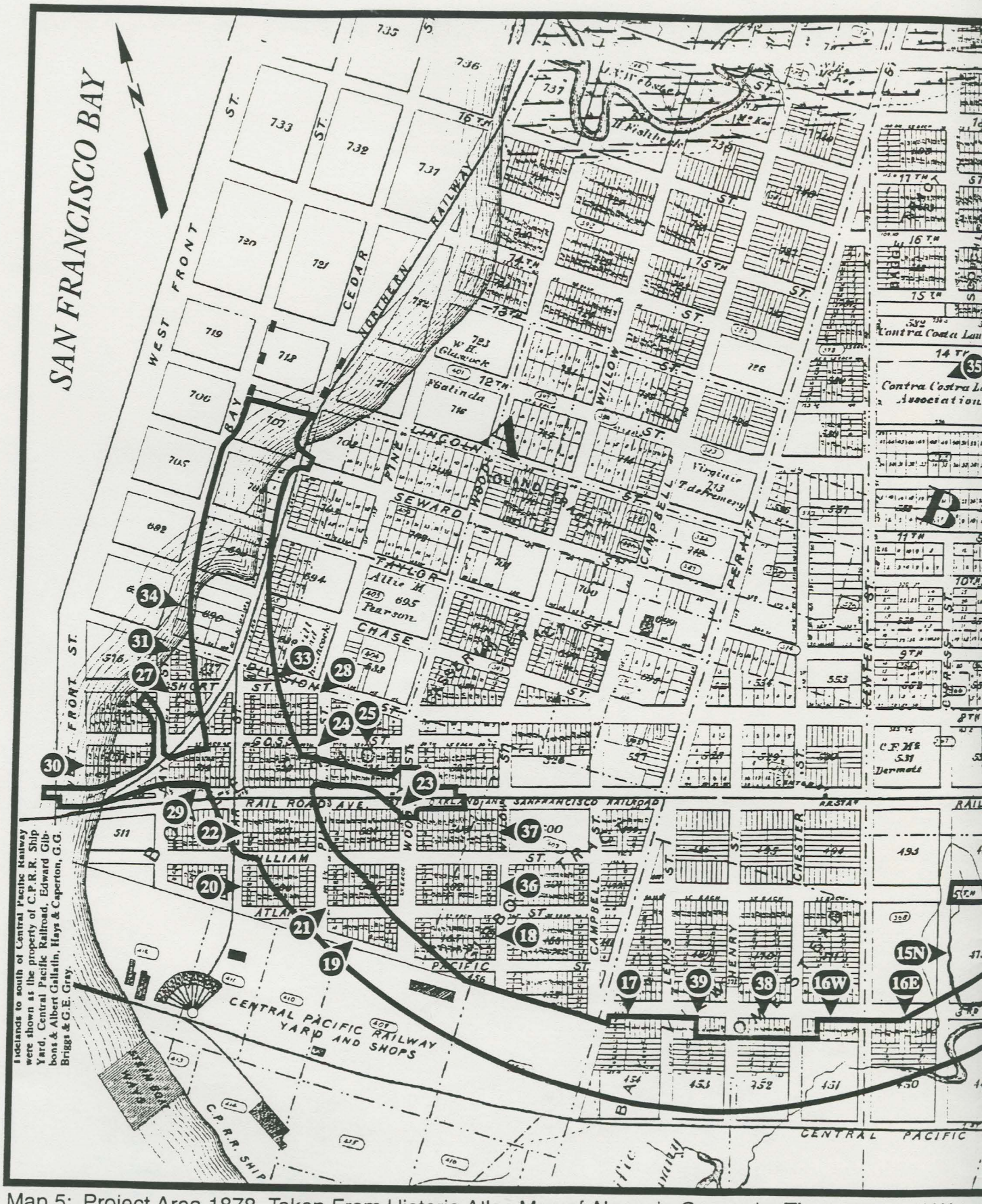
The Melting Pot

Writing in his *Centennial Year Book of Alameda County* in 1876, William Halley noted: "The population is truly conglomerate, consisting of American, Irish, French, Germans, Jews, Portuguese, and native Californians, all equally dividing the business of the place and sharing

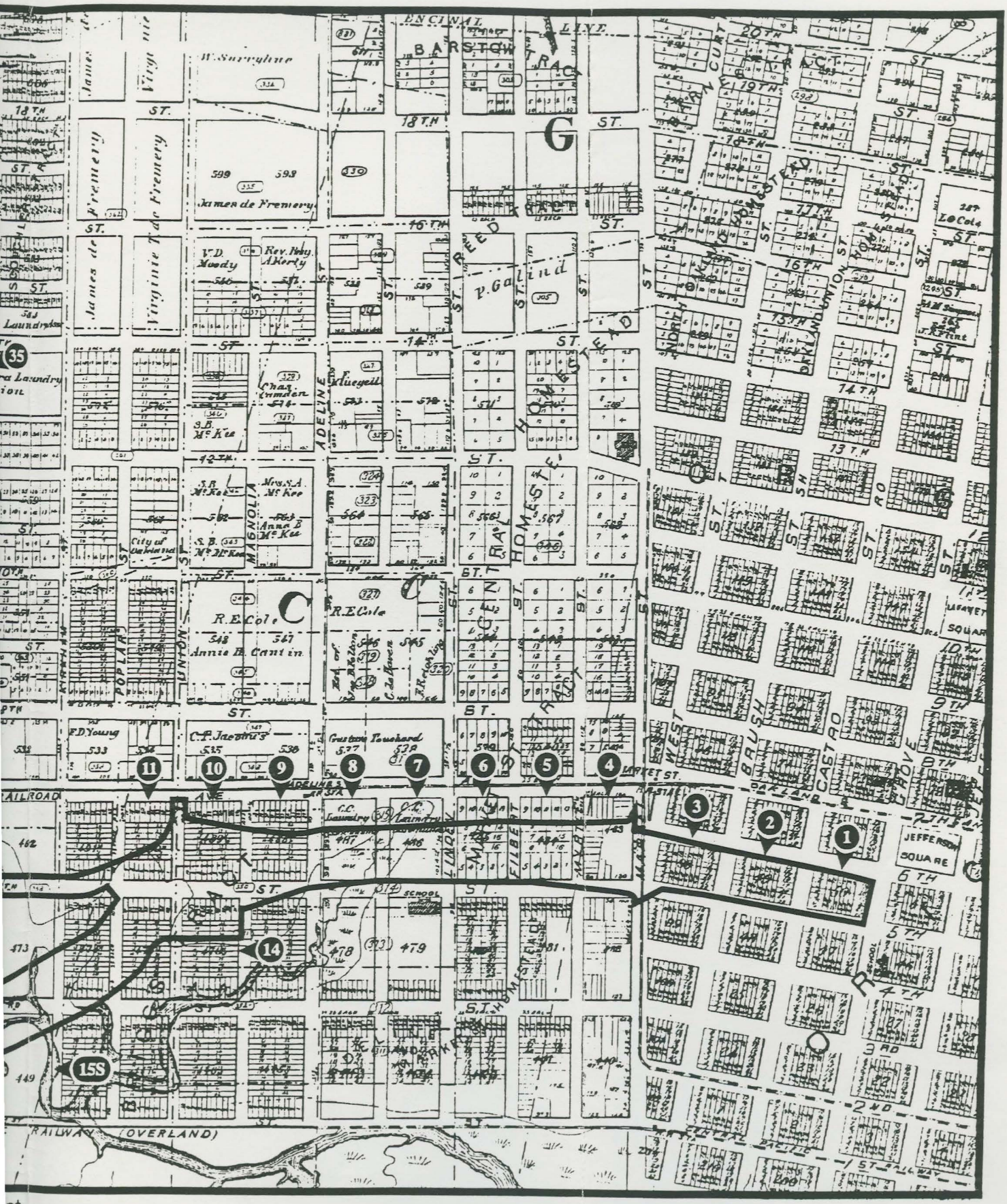
its profits" (1876:110). One might argue with the degree of equality of shared business and profits, but diversity did characterize Oakland. Although the population numbers had grown, and the ethnic mix had shifted, Oakland--and West Oakland in particular--had not changed that much by the 1920s, as Vernon Sappers recalled:

> There were four main groups in West Oakland in the 1920s: the Portuguese, Italians, Slovaks, and the Irish. Down along Fifth Street, and further--that was what I would imagine was considered the district that was "the other side of the tracks." There was a group of black people there who had their own church and got along well--everyone got along well, there was none of the harshness that exists today. A lot of them were employed by the railroad as porters, cooks, and waiters.
>
> One of the men who worked at the pier lived at Fifth and Willow, the family were named Cardoza. He worked at the pier as a laborer and lived in a little small house painted that horrible West Oakland grey. They were a lovely old couple, spoke Portuguese in the home. Inside, the home was immaculate. Very plain, but very clean, everything in its place, and the smell of cooking everywhere--a most pleasing smell--it pervaded the whole house. They knew how to use garlic and onion, and they would have this pot of lovely stew on the stove bubbling away all day.
>
> This was the early 20s. They did have indoor plumbing. The houses there along Willow all looked alike; they were sort of in a row, and the grounds were all used for growing vegetables, with a few flowers in between. The architecture was very plain on those houses; they were built about 1901 or 1902. They were Portuguese and Slavonians and Italians along these streets. As the children grew up and went to school, they graduated into higher positions. The Cardoza daughter, Rose, worked in the glove factory on Seventh Street between 1905 and 1912. Rose was born in about the mid-1880s. After Rose got married, she stopped working in the glove factory. A lot of the Portuguese women worked in the canneries.
>
> Going back there later on, by the 1940s, those Portuguese families were mostly gone. They had moved to San Leandro, out into the country where they could have gardens or could farm. They all seemed to have moved out of the city by then [Vernon Sappers/Olmsted interview, March 18, 1993].

Sappers' statement that "everyone got along well" was not a casual remark, but a point that he made at several times in different interviews with considerable emphasis. Research done by the Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey reached the same conclusion: "West Oaklanders before World War II had a Golden Age reputation which appears in too many sources and in too many forms to be pure promotion or pure nostalgia. The keynote is always that the community was a melting pot of classes, nationalities, races, and for that matter, land uses" (1990 [2]:40). If there was a West Oakland out-group from 1880 through 1910, it was the Chinese, especially among the Irish immigrants, whose tough gangs vented their feelings with rocks and verbal abuse. Anti-Chinese feeling was widespread in California, and in the Bay Area in particular, from the beginning of the depression in the mid-1870s through 1900. This phenomenon is discussed in more detail on pages 66-71.



Map 5: Project Area 1878, Taken From Historic Atlas Map of Alameda County by Thompson and West



ENCINAL LINE
BARSTOW TRACT
REED TRACT
CENTRAL HOMESTEAD
OAKLAND UNION HOMESTEAD
NORTH OAKLAND HOMESTEAD
WEST BRUSH
CASTRO GROVE
JEFFERSON SQUARE
MARKET ST.
ADELINE
MAGNOLIA
UNION
POPLAR
RAILROAD
RAILWAY (OVERLAND)
CENTRAL PACIFIC
W. Surryline
James de Fremery
Virginie T. de Fremery
V.D. Moody
Rev. Roy. A. Kerly
P. Galind
Chas. Camden
S.B. McKee
Mrs. S.A. McKee
Anna B. McKee
City of Oakland
R.E. Cole
Annie H. Cantin
F.D. Young
C.P. Jacobus
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C.C. Laundry
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A number of different factors came together in West Oakland from 1880 through 1910 that made the melting pot simmer along in general conviviality. Beyond the firm economic base of the railroad, with jobs covering a wide range of diversified skills, West Oakland offered a broad spectrum of employment possibilities to both men and women, skilled and unskilled, educated and uneducated, those who spoke English and those who did not. In this respect, Oakland was in considerable contrast to San Francisco.

South of Market studies on San Francisco immigrant populations show largely Irish populations densely packed into flats, tenements, and small rented row houses. San Francisco had no large single employer that could offer a range of skilled to unskilled steady employment. There was far greater rivalry for what jobs existed when the depression that started in the mid-1870s coincided with a wave of immigration from the East Coast and from China. Factory jobs for immigrant women were almost unheard of in the 1870s and 1880s, because San Francisco had nothing like the Contra Costa Laundry, the paper box factory, the pickle works, the jute mill, the glove factory, or the canneries--all within walking distance or cheap and short train rides to working-class homes. By 1880 in San Francisco, the Chinese had monopolized the cigar-making industry and the shoe-repair business, and dominated the laundry trade. Hence the bitterness of the unemployed Irish workers at a time when one of out of every five working men in the city was Chinese (Olmsted et al. 1979:148-153 passim).

The demographic mix of immigrants in West Oakland was far more diverse and balanced than in San Francisco. Our census sample shows a 20% Irish-born population within the project area, in contrast to 75% in San Francisco's 10th Ward in 1880. By 1900 and 1910, large groups of Greeks, Slavonians, and Portuguese had moved into the West Oakland project area. And most of them had found jobs, many with the railroad as their employer. As the story under a photograph of some 60 shop men working for the Central Pacific in 1876 explains, "In this gang were men of all creeds and nationalities but not one harsh word was ever uttered as all were of the best of friends and ever ready to assist in times of trouble" (*West of Market Boys' Journal*, October 1937). Although the writer may well have been recalling the best of the good old days, he expressed his underlying deep friendship for his railroad buddies. When they got off work, many of these railway workers would have relaxed over a beer in one of the local saloons, where they shared stories and talked shop and politics. Many of the single men would have boarded together, most likely somewhere along Seventh Street. Essentially, they became a close-knit community founded on shared everyday experiences that cut across many cultural differences. All of the faces in that 1876 photograph, however, are white. African-American Pullman porters and cooks would later form the basis for their own unions.

Diversity Demonstrated by Statistics: Historians working for the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s made a concentrated effort to document as much of Oakland's "social, economic, and political history" as they could put together. Edgar Hinkel and William

McCann took available census figures for all of Alameda County and, based on recorded general population figures for Oakland, they made their best estimates for the city. In the opinion of the Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey, "These figures probably correspond generally to [ethnic] proportions at Oakland Point" (1990 [2]:47). No figures are available for 1860, when the population of Oakland was estimated at about 1,553. No estimated figures are provided for 1880, when Oakland's population was 36,500. No Federal census figures are available for 1890 as the data were destroyed by fire.

Estimates of Oakland Ethnic Populations Based on Alameda County Census

Country of Origin	**1870**	**10,500**	**1900**	**66,590**	**1910**	**150,174**	**1930**	**284,063**
England, Scotland & Wales	420	4%	3382	5%	5304	3.5%	7674	3%
Ireland	1150	11%	3664	5%	4160	3%	3175	1%
Germany	559	5%	4223	6%	5476	4%	4778	2%
Sweden, Norway & Denmark	19	-	2598	4%	4794	3%	1551	-
Italy	38	-	816	1%	3800	2.5%	6360	2%
France	122	1%	707	1%	1205	1%	1334	-
Black (wherever born)	55	-	1026	1.5%	3055	2%	7503	3%
Asiatic	(no figures available)						5185	2%

"Figures for the Portuguese, and Slavic immigrants are not included in these estimates, although they were a recognized presence at the Point; in the 1930 census there were about 3000 Poles, Czechs, Austrians, Hungarians, Yugoslavs, and Russians, and about 3500 Oaklanders from Portugal and the Azores" (Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey 1990 [2]:47).

The Portuguese in West Oakland: The Portuguese presence dates back to the earliest European settlement of West Oakland, when whalers and fishermen from the Azores were capturing whales all along the northern California Coast in the 1850s (Vaz 1965:44). By 1858 the *San Leandro Gazette* complained about the Portuguese inflating land prices by paying high rents in Alameda County: ". . . the Portuguese had gone on renting, and from renting to buying, until many of them are now well off and all of them are making something" (Halley 1876:134). Halley elaborates on this pattern some 20 years later:

> The Portuguese population, or more properly speaking, the Portuguese colonists from the Western Isles, were settling so rapidly in this country at this time and paying such high prices for small parcels of land, that a humorous correspondent in the county paper, written at Centerville, remarked that "a Portuguese advancing towards your premises for the purposes of negotiating a purchase, adds much greater enhancement to its value than the assurance of having a railroad pass through your veranda" [1876:198].

Halley went on to comment that, by 1870:

> What is called the Portuguese population in Alameda County commenced to settle here at an early date, and are amongst the most thriving portion of our population, occupying as they do, small farms of the better land and growing vegetables and fruits. They are natives of the Azores or Western Isles, and are an exceedingly industrious and thrifty class, with simple hearts and simple pleasures, and number between 4,000 and 5,000 in the county [1876:339].

During the 1880s, as waves of Portuguese came into the United States, many continued west to northern California, which was so much like their own homeland in geography and climate. By 1892 Oakland was the unofficial Portuguese capital of California, with over 4,000 Portuguese residents in Alameda County. "Sailing and fishing were frequent occupations for Portuguese Oaklanders, many of whom came from the Azores and Hawaii. Many also worked for the railroads, more often as laborers than as engineers or carpenters. In the present Point district their homes seem to have been scattered; the local Portuguese enclave was across Seventh Street" (Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey 1990 [2]:48).

Vernon Sappers has described the Cardoza residence on Willow, south of Seventh, in the 1920s. He went on to describe his mother's feelings about West Oakland:

> The unions had auxiliaries for the women, there were frequent dances and picnics, and an annual outing. They would have dances down in the halls, like Hansen's. My mother looked down on them--she would say that those Seventh Street dance halls were "just tough places." And there would be fights sometimes. There were a lot of Portuguese living near Seventh Street, and I learned to speak Portuguese visiting my friends' houses and listening to them talk. Now my mother was of Portuguese descent, but she never would socialize with the Portuguese people there. And in fact, that was the main reason why she would never go down with Dad and myself to West Oakland. Because she thought they were low-class Portuguese down there. It all depended on what island you came from. The Portuguese from Hawaii, they were the laborers, and the Portuguese from Madeira looked down on them. My mother's family came from the Island of Flowers--and they looked down on the Madeirans. Where your family came from mattered [Sappers/Olmsted interview, April 14,1993].

In his semi-autobiographical novel, *Martin Eden* (published in 1908), Jack London describes renting a room in West Oakland from a Portuguese widow who supported her seven children by doing laundry in her kitchen:

He paid two dollars and a half a month rent for the small room he got from his Portuguese landlady, Maria Silva, a virago and a widow, hard working and harsher tempered, rearing her large brood of children somehow, and drowning her sorrow and fatigue at irregular intervals in a gallon of the thin, sour wine that she bought from the corner grocery and saloon for fifteen cents . . . she cooked, and all ate, in the kitchen, where she likewise washed, starched, and ironed clothes on all days of the week, except Sunday; for her income came largely from taking in washing from her more prosperous neighbors . . . the bedroom, small as the one occupied by Martin, into which she and her seven little ones slept . . . from her side of the partition he heard nightly every detail of the going to bed, the squalls and squabbles, the soft chattering, and the sleepy twittering noises as of birds.

Another source of income to Maria were her cows, two of them, which she milked night and morning and gained a surreptitious livelihood from vacant lots and the grass that grew on either side the public sidewalks, attended always by one or more of her ragged boys, whose watchful guardianship consisted chiefly in keeping their eyes out for the poundmen . . . .

Maria Silva was poor, and all the ways of poverty were clear to her. . . . When she thought hunger pinched hardest, she would send him a loaf of her new baking, awkwardly covering the act with banter to the effect that it was better than he could bake. And again, she would send one of her toddlers in to him with a great pitcher of hot soup. . . . On a day when she had filled her brood with what was left in the house, Maria invested her last fifteen cents in a gallon of cheap wine . . . coming into the kitchen to fetch water, he was invited to sit down and drink. He drank her very good health and in return she drank his. Then she drank to the prosperity of his undertakings, and he drank to the hope that James Grant would show up and pay her for his washing. James Grant was a journeyman carpenter who did not always pay his bills and who owed Maria three dollars. . . .

Maria was amazed to learn that he had been in the Hawaiian Islands, whither she had migrated from the Azores with her people . . . he studied the deep-lined face of the toil-worn woman before him, remembered her soups and loaves of new baking bread. . . . "Maria," he exclaimed, "What would you like to have? Right now, if you could get it?"

"Shoe alla da roun' for de childs--seven pairs da shoe" . . .
"But I mean a big wish, something big that you want". . .

"I like da have one milka ranch--good milka ranch. Plenty cow, plenty land, plenty grass. I lika da have near San Le-an; my sister liva dere. I sella da milk in Oakland" [1908:176-193 passim]

London briefly mentions in this passage the Portuguese commitment to owning land to farm, corroborating Vernon Sappers' observations that most of the Portuguese families that he had known as a boy in West Oakland had moved away by 1940, many to farm. In one of London's last books (published in 1913), *Valley of the Moon*, he describes the upward mobility of the Portuguese immigrant as seen through the eyes of a San Leandro farmer:

They worked the land overtime. Because they worked morning, noon and night, all hands, women and kids. . . . They could get more out of twenty acres than we could out of hundred and sixty. Look at old Antonio Silva. . . . He didn't have the price of

> a square meal when he hit this section and begun leasin' land from my folks. Look at him now--worth two hundred and fifty thousand cold, and I bet he's got credit for a million. . . . The Porchugeesz have got us skinned a mile . . . by being wise to farming. The whole blame family works . . . a hundred acres in peas, eighty in tomatoes, thirty in asparagus, ten in pie-plant, forty in cucumbers. . . . The Porchugeeze is natural born farmers, and we don't know nothing about farming [1913a:307-310].

In tracing the pattern of Portuguese settlement in West Oakland, it is noteworthy that the Catholic Church followed its flock. Dedicated in 1892 in West Oakland, St. Joseph's Church at Seventh and Chestnut became the focal point of religious and social activity for the Portuguese. The *Oakland Enquirer* commented: "There are many hundreds of Portuguese families in this city, and very few of them know much of the English language. The opening of the new edifice ends the long struggle for the natives of sunny Portugal in Oakland, who have worked earnestly for a great many years to secure for themselves a place of worship where they could perform their religious duties in their native tongue" (February 23, 1892).

In 1902 a group of Salesian fathers, led by Reverend F. Bergeritti, who had served as a missionary in Ceylon and India, were sent to care for the local Portuguese population and take charge of the church. "From this time on, the Church of St. Joseph was under the care of the Salesian fathers . . . so identified themselves with the Portuguese that to this day the names of Father Galli, Father Ferreira, and Father Ragogna are considered 'Portuguese' by those who remember their untiring efforts on behalf of the Portuguese immigrants" (Vaz 1965:194). As late as 1930 St. Joseph's was still listed as a center for Portuguese and Italian language communities, although by then there were two more Catholic churches catering to the needs of Oakland's Portuguese population--but these churches were located in East Oakland. There had been an increase in the number of Portuguese, and some had moved to other heavily Portugeuse neighborhoods, such as "Jingletown" in East Oakland.

The Germans in West Oakland: German immigrants to Oakland followed the investment and land-ownership pattern that characterized the South of Market neighborhoods in San Francisco (Olmsted et al. 1979). Germans invested in commercial property on street corners, and they often held on to the property for a long period of time--frequently operating a grocery store, either next door to a corner saloon or as a combined operation.

In fact, the first grocery store in West Oakland was Buhsen's at the southwest corner of Pine and Seventh streets, opened in 1864 by D. Buhsen (*Oakland Tribune*, November 19, 1954). J. J. Roberts of *The West of Market Boys' Journal* recalled: "At Seventh and Pine stood Diedrich Buhsen's Grocery store, the first one in Oakland, in an old wooden building. About sixty-five years ago [1876] this building burned down. Whiskey barrels were moved to a vacant lot across the street and everyone helped himself and what a night it was" (July 1939). Within three months, Buhsen had rebuilt his property as the first brick building in West Oakland, and this

may be seen in Plate 41. By 1883 N. D. Buhsen and H. Meyer sold groceries and liquor at 1801 Seventh Street. Herman Meyer lived next door, upstairs at 1803 Seventh Street. By that date, Diedrich Buhsen styled himself as a "capitalist" and lived around the corner a block away, in a house on the corner of William and Pine. On the 1889 Sanborn Map, the brick structure is now called "Buhsen's Hotel," with a saloon operating from the ground floor corner. As part of this same property facing Seventh Street, a bakery with a bakehouse out in back had been added, as well as a narrow restaurant fronting on Seventh Street.

The Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey commented, "German names are prominent from the Point's earliest years as merchants and landowners: Ziegenbein, Hufschmidt, Fuchs, Hink, Schrieber, Hoppe, Scholl, Gohrman, Zeiss and Breiling, Gernrich and Thornburg, Samm and Westpal, Thaler, Albrecht, Kohler, and more" (1990 [2]:48). Prosperity rewarded the Germans' hard work and wise financial decisions, according to a column in the *Oakland Enquirer*:

> *Those Thrifty Germans*: What the Germans are as an industrial force in the United States, they are in their own country, except perhaps, a little more so. They are somewhat modified by American example when they come here, but retain enough of their German habits to show what they are in their native land. As an industrial nation, the German has no superior in the world. No matter in what part of the civilized or uncivilized world he may be planted, he will be sure to prosper as much as conditions will allow anyone to do so. The German is not speculative; he does not buy two or three times as much property as he can pay for; he refuses to discount the future to that extent; but he pushes his business, whatever it may be, and enlarges as fast as his actual need. And whatever amount he earns, whether large or small, he saves something; out of today's wages or income, he puts aside something for tomorrow's use or for permanent accumulation. This saving habit is the basis of the national prosperity of Germany, and is a lesson to America, and every speculative country in the world [June 29, 1894].

Still another corner property owner, well-known and remembered, was the cigar-maker Herman Frisch, whom the West of Market Boys recalled as having run his cigar shop there for more than 46 years. The property along the north side of Seventh Street extending west to Pine was originally owned by Pliny Bartlett, who built four good-sized houses set back from the street on large lots. By the time of the 1889 Sanborn Map, Bartlett had sold the corner lot and a plain, two-story commercial building had been erected on that site. It was here that Herman Frisch had his store that Vernon Sappers recalled visiting with his father in the 1920s and 1930s:

> Frisch's cigar stand at Seventh and Pine was there for many years, right on the corner. Pine Street was the stop for the local red trains. Mr. Frisch was a typical Germanic man, but a Bavarian--very dark with beady black eyes and nice big handlebar moustache. He spoke very well--he was very emphatic and it was a joy to watch him making his cigars, which he made all on his own. He would send the cigars to customers everywhere; he would ship them all over the world. They were famous

cigars. He would pack them in good smelling boxes and paste lovely scenes on the lids. Cigar-box art was special.

He would often speak of the old country--and of how he hated Hitler, who had a chateau back there, in Bavaria. The Germans were very thrifty and they were good citizens--they owned their property where their stores were. I never knew where Mr. Frisch lived; it must have been up over his store.

My father didn't smoke cigars, but we would go in there for the root beer that came from a big barrel, with an elaborate spigot--all carved metal, and shiny. He sold lots of stuff to trainmen--jumpers, overalls, gloves, bandannas, time books, pencils, writing tablets with that nice lined linen-like paper, playing cards. It was quite an institution. Like a lot of West Oakland, it was plain, very plain--with an old wood floor and wood ceiling, inadequately lighted. It was always kind of dim, but very friendly. I liked to go in there and drink root beer while he and Dad talked [Vernon Sappers/Olmsted interview, April 14, 1993].

Probably one of the first German settlers on the Point was John L. Frese, who built, in the mid-1860s, perhaps the oldest boarding house in West Oakland, at the corner of Seventh and Bay streets, when Bay Street edged the water. "Frese was born in Bremen Germany in 1831 and settled in Contra Costa County on what is now Adeline Street, between First and Second. Here he engaged in farming and was said to have been the first to raise potatoes in what became Oakland Township. He moved in 1850 to a place known as the 'old German Coral,' between Fourteenth and Fifteenth streets, where he remained for six or seven years. Then he went into the restaurant and lodging house business 'up-town'" (Hinkel and McCann 1939 [2]:333).

The advertisement in Oakland's first city directory in 1868 shows John L. Frese as the owner of the Railroad Exchange Hotel, with a saloon on the corner. "One of the oldest buildings is the boarding house on the corner of Seventh and Bay, known as the Freese [sic] Building. This building had been a boarding house for the past 66 years and most of the patrons in those days were bridge builders for the Central Pacific. All the bridges, stations, wharves, and culverts were made of wood and it kept quite a gang of men rebuilding these wooden structures" (T.J. Roberts, *West of Market Boys' Journal*, August 1939).

Still operating as the Railroad Exchange Hotel in 1889, Frese's early boarding house is shown on the Sanborn map and in Plate 42. Carl Frese is listed in the city directory for 1883 as a fireman with the Central Pacific Railroad, living upstairs at the hotel. John L. Frese is listed as operating the saloon on the corner of Bay and Seventh streets in 1883.

There does not seem to be a specific West Oakland German neighborhood. Instead, Germans appear to have lived and worked throughout the Oakland Point area. Within the project area, the 1880 Census recorded 55 German heads of household living throughout the different blocks. This was the second largest immigrant group counted in the project area, the Irish being the largest ethnic group in 1880. There was a noticeable preponderance of Germans running small shops and enterprises in the project area: grocery stores, saloons, bakeries, and butcher shops, as well as boarding houses and a pickle works. German immigrants were not as likely

to work for the railroad; German carpenters were recorded more frequently as "house carpenters." Nor do we find many Germans in unskilled labor; instead, all of the cabinet makers living in the project area in 1880 were German. From at least 1878 through 1883, the German-language *Oakland Journal* was published as a semi-weekly newspaper.

There was no Lutheran church in West Oakland. "The absence of a German church suggests that, like John Ziegenbein, many were free-thinkers who did not belong to any church or secret society" (*Oakland Enquirer,* January 17, 1889, quoted in Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey 1990 [2]:48). By the 1930s several Lutheran churches catering especially to Danes, Norwegians, and Swedes had opened up in East Oakland and out in the avenues. But no German language church is listed in the definitive WPA studies on Oakland churches.

The Irish: In 1880 the largest immigrant group living within the project area was Irish--97 heads of household, or adult wage earners, were located in the census data. Although scattered in many different occupations, in 1880 more Irish listed themselves as "laborers" than in any other category. The number of Irish living in the project area would increase by 1900, although as an immigrant group in Oakland they were to be surpassed in numbers by the Italians between 1900 and 1910.

> John Zunino, a West of Market Boy, wrote in 1946 about the St Patrick's Day celebrations at old St. Patrick's (then being demolished): "One year I took part, playing my little old squeeze box, and on looking over the program I discovered that mine was the only foreign name on the program, the rest being all Irish. In later years, things began to change, as they often do. The old families began moving out of the old neighborhood, little by little, until few were left. I'll never forget an entertainment at St. Patrick's where the entertainers were either Slavs or Italians, and only two Irish names appeared on the program." The five-fold growth of Oakland's Italian population between 1900 and 1910 has been attributed to North Beach residents moving from San Francisco after the earthquake [Eleanor Edwards, Memories of West Oakland, *The Montclarion* July 7, 1982, quoted in Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey 1990 [2]:49].

In San Francisco in 1873, the *Catholic Guardian* described the Irish working-man's lot:

> The day laborers in the city lead hard lives. . . running . . . to catch the . . .street cars. In the evening they have to return; rain may be falling or a cold wind blowing; a glass of beer or whiskey at the next grocery store is taken to keep out the cold, and they arrive at home in wet clothes. They pay for rent, five dollars a month; car hire, three; for beer or whiskey "to keep out the cold" three dollars *at least*, eleven dollar a month, to which we must add the expense of meeting friends at the bar now and then--this may may be fairly estimated at an additional four dollars a month [March 22, 1873].

Unlike the Irish in windy, foggy San Francisco, Oakland's Irish could not, with much credibility, budget extra dollars "to keep out the cold." But Irish barkeepers abounded, as did Irish drinkers. It is difficult to say precisely how many places there were along Seventh Street

where a man could stop in for a glass of beer or a shot of whiskey, since although saloons were noted as saloons, grocery stores also carried liquor and served it by the drink--"When grocery stores were all located on the corner with a saloon in the rear" (*West of Market Boys's Journal,* Louis Rudolph, February 1937).

The 1889 Sanborn maps for four project blocks facing one another along Seventh Street show 11 saloons, one on each of seven corners, and at least one additional bar on the middle of each block (Blocks 22-25). In addition, there were seven restaurants on these same blocks that probably served wine and beer.

But as Jack London noted in *John Barleycorn*, after a man had worked longer and harder all day than any horse in Oakland, a saloon "was a delightful and desirable place":

> The saloon's doors were ever open. And always and everywhere I found saloons. . . And in saloons life was different. Men talked with great voices, laughed great laughs, and there was an atmosphere of greatness. Here was something more than common every-day where nothing happened. Here life was always very live, and, sometimes, even lurid, where blows were struck, and blood was shed, and big policemen came shouldering in. Great moments, these, for me, my head filled with all the wild and valiant fighting of the gallant adventurers on sea and land. . . . And more, the saloons were right. The city fathers sanctioned them and licensed them. They were not the terrible places I heard boys deem them who lacked my opportunities [1913b:50-51].

In his "alcoholic memoirs" quoted above, London contended that it was the constant availability of liquor inside the always open doors of saloons that led to heavy drinking. Predictably, drunkenness resulted in abusive behavior that Catholic tracts fought against as a threat to family life among their immigrant congregations. *John Barleycorn* was nationally serialized and widely quoted in temperance league meetings. London went so far as to admit, in the opening pages of that book, that he had voted for women's suffrage in the hope that with the vote in women's hands, public places to drink would be outlawed. A familiar kind of suffering in West Oakland immigrant families was described in the local press:

> *Walks About Town:* A little Irish woman in a cart drove up to a saloon on a side street. There was a look of expectancy on her thin face, which had in it, more of dread than gladness. Someone had doubtlessly ordered her to appear on the hour and she was simply obeying orders. The cold damp air which followed the setting of the sun enveloped her and made her shiver. The boisterous laughter floated out beyond the green baize door, sent a look into her patient eyes which told of bitter experience in the past.
>
> The darkness was now broken by the sharp gleam from corner lights. The woman waited patiently, and the horse was dozing meekly, when the sudden swing of the saloon door brought it to an erect position. The figure that stumbled down the step and fell upon the cart seat with a lurch that well nigh unseated the woman, simply growled: "What in ---- are you waitin' for?" She thought how she knew him when she married him; and she knows now that she was mistaken [*Oakland Enquirer,* August 26, 1894].

Alcoholism, perhaps the most acute family problem of the working class, was hardly exclusively Irish. For the Irish laboring class, however, the tradition of heavy male drinking accompanied by family abuse was a custom that followed them from the old country. Father McNalley at St. Patrick's Church might extol the virtues of family life, hard work, and sobriety; it is unlikely that his admonitions had much effect (*Oakland Enquirer*, May 22, 1885). Charles R. Snyder in his study of "Culture and Sobriety: Signs of Alcoholism," noted:

> Irish country culture appears to be an "ideal type" case of a deeply embedded tradition of utilitarian drinking. There is also a tradition of convivial social drinking in which drunkenness is common, but there is an extensive body of tradition which tends to orient individuals toward drinking for the effect of alcohol as a generalized means of social adjustment [1956:128].

"The Irish," wrote Macaulay, ". . .were distinguished by qualities that make men interesting rather than prosperous. They were an ardent and impetuous race, easily moved to tears or laughter, to fury or to love" (1866 [1]:72). Such a temperament produced a celebrated local Irish hero: one-armed Charley Hall, whose exploits in West Oakland during the 1894 railroad strike were recalled 50 years later in the *West of Market Boys' Journal*:

> Do you Remember--The railroad strike in West Oakland when Charley Hall, the employee with one arm rode up and down on the pier upon a white horse, waving an American flag and keeping up the courage of the many strikers by his encouragement and reporting to the newspapers the progress being made on the battlefront. He was deserving of everything that was good for his efforts on behalf of his fellow workers [January 1940].

In 1888 the city directory located Charley Hall, then a brakeman for the Southern Pacific, living at the Charter Oak Hotel on Seventh Street (Block 23). From 1875 through 1882, his father, William Hall, rented this building as proprietor of this well-known lodging house. The Charter Oak Hotel was named for the large and ancient oak tree by the front door, a rare survivor of Oakland's earlier woodland.

Charley Hall's mother, Mary Hall, took over the proprietorship of the boarding house after her husband's death. In 1888 Mrs. Michael Halloran took over as proprietor, and it was in that year that Charles Hall, together with his brother, George, who was a laborer for the railroad, and James Hall, who was a railroad carpenter, all lodged together at the Charter Oak. By 1901 Charles Hall, a towerman, was living just west of Adeline on Seventh Street. The Charter Oak Hotel had been the lodging house of choice for many Irish working men. The 1880 Census recorded 17 single men as boarders; 7 were Irish-born laborers, 4 were house carpenters and painters who had Irish parents. Charley Hall's grandmother-in-law, Della Keegan, age 77 and born in Ireland, roomed at the lodging house, as did her Irish-born relation, Delia Keegan, age 35. They were the only female boarders at Charter Oak Hotel at that particular time.

Typical Irish families living within the project area in 1880 could be found on Block 18, living in small houses on Willow, Atlantic, and Pacific streets. On the corner of Willow and Pacific, Irish-born G. Culhane ran the corner grocery and liquor store from 1877 through 1888. He was 58 at the time of the 1880 Census and had married his younger wife, Julia, in Missouri. The Culhanes had produced three children before immigrating to California in about 1871, when their nine-year-old son was born. By 1880 they had six children. At 35, Julia, who had been born in Missouri of Irish parents, was keeping house and looking after the children.

Among the neighbors and probable patrons at Culhane's store were Irish-born Patrick and Kate McCarthy, who lived in a very small house at 1709 Atlantic Street. At age 52, Patrick had a low-paying job as an oiler on the steamer *Capital*. Living at home were three children, twin girls age 10 and a boy age 7. Directly next door at 1711 were Michael and Mary Dolan, ages 40 and 27, respectively. Michael supported his wife and five children by working as a laborer. In 1880 the census recorded seven Irish families on this block; with the exception of the storekeeper Culhane, each of the Irish workers on Block 18 would have been in the lowest wage-earning class as a laborer, hod carrier, cook, oiler, or washerwoman. Walter L. Gallagher wrote about his nostalgia for West Oakland's Irish people:

> Do you remember the good old days around West Oakland when mostly the Irish people were great for having Saturday night dances in their homes? Everybody was invited who cared to attend and dance the old square dances such as the Virginia Reel, Polka, Lancers, and Schottische. Music was furnished by some neighbor with accordion, violin, or harmonica. Refreshments consisted of good old corned beef sandwiches, beer and wine. People of those days were very friendly and kind and were always ready to give a helping hand when a person was down and out. Most everybody's home was open to anyone to drop in for a schooner of good old steam beer or a glass of red wine [*West of Market Boys' Journal*, April 1938].

Asians in West Oakland: Most of the Chinese living in Oakland settled outside of West Oakland. As early as 1860, the Federal Census recorded 96 "Asiatics" out of a total of 1,543 people in Oakland (Weber 1981:52). The Asians counted in that survey may have included members of a fishing encampment at Oakland Point (on or nearby project Blocks 29 and 30), and perhaps those of another fishing settlement near the foot of Market Street, five blocks south of the project area. Bagwell notes (1982:87): "A small number of Chinese settled on the Estuary in Oakland, where they lived in poor shacks and fished for shrimp. Some apparently settled near the Point in West Oakland, as Ellen Burrell refers to it as 'Chinese Point.'" These Chinese fishing settlements dated back to the 1850s: Chinese fishermen may have been the first squatters near the Estuary on the Peralta land. Because they did not own the land, and there are no surviving census schedules from 1850 for research, these Chinese left no archival trail.

Although Chinese labor accomplished much of the building of the transcontinental railroad, the local trade unionists kept them from being hired to work in the railroad yards or shops. The

Asian presence within the project area was always specifically located, but never very large. For example, there was one Chinese "wash house" on Block 30 found in the 1880 Census, but by the time of the 1889 Sanborn Map this small enclave had been removed, probably by fire. The four corner lots that stood empty on Block 30 in 1889 were owned by George Godfrey, who had made his "ample fortune" in the laundry business during the Gold Rush in San Francisco. By the time of the 1900 census, two other groups of Chinese laundry workers lived along Seventh Street, as well as a small group of seven Chinese men and women who lived together with a head of household who listed his occupation as "Manufacturing Agent."

The six live-in Chinese servants located in the 1880 Census at the eastern edge of the project area are not found at any later date. These were the family cooks remembered by Dr. Edward Anthony: "Our China cook, Ah Shoo, and Gee Nye, Fred Sanderlin's cook, always chipped in to give a real Fourth of July to the neighbors" (*West of Market Boys' Journal*, September 1940). Unlike most immigrants to California, many of the single male Chinese immigrants were "sojourners" by their own definition: they came to make money at "the Gold Mountain" and then return to China. It should be added that by the time of the 1900 census there were no families living within the project area who employed live-in servants.

One of the largest employers of Chinese workers, as well as Portuguese and Italian women, was Lew Hing, who got his start operating the Pacific Coast Cannery in San Francisco, and then moved his establishment to Oakland in 1903-1904. This large cannery, located just north of the project area on two blocks at Twelfth and Pine, "became the largest single employer of Chinese in the area, and by 1911, one of Oakland's largest businesses. There were 1000 employees hired at peak fruit picking and canning season" (Jean Moon Liu: Lew Hing, *A Family Portrait*, 8, quoted in Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey 1990 [2]:50). A considerable number of Chinese employees lived near this two-block cannery. Although five blocks north of the project area, this fruit-packing factory--as well as several smaller Chinese-owned canning operations--was close enough to offer many newly arrived immigrant women summer and fall jobs sorting, picking, peeling, and pitting fruit for what became one of California's biggest export industries.

Twenty Japanese residents lived within the project area at Fifth and Brush, either on Block 2 or 3, from at least 1884 through 1894--perhaps for longer. Research uncovered one reference to this small community in the *Oakland Enquirer*:

> More than ten years ago, T. Sanamoto became the organizer of the Japanese Society, of which this house is the center. The object of his work is to provide situations for his countrymen and insure Christian and educational influences. . . . Newcomers from Japan are placed into the hands of private teachers, both American and Japanese. Several years ago these boys attended grammar school, but now they are prepared for high school by private teachers.
>
> The boarders consist of two classes: students and household servants; for the latter are provided evening schools. . . . The management of the house is entirely decided by the older ones . . . they declared against the use of tobacco indoors. . . . They

conduct a restaurant, distinct from the house, and charge the boarders ten cents for a single meal, or $6.00 a month. Meals consist generally of American viands with the exception of one day each week when Japanese dinner is served [June 28, 1894].

Americans Move West

Of the 480 heads of household counted by the 1880 Census enumerator within the project area, 229 (or 48%) were born in the United States. Most of these respondents were from New York and the New England states; the next largest group came from the Midwest, and a few migrated from the South; this last group included the six families identified in the census schedules as black or mulatto.

Americans moving West had a great advantage over immigrants from Europe. First, they spoke the language (as did the immigrant Irish, certainly a good reason why they were so quickly assimilated into West Coast urban centers), and second, from their own personal experience and their parents' observations, they understood how the American economic system worked. In some instances new arrivals either brought capital with them or had access to financial help; others brought special skills learned in East Coast urban centers. The master of a sailing ship had an international ticket to financial security, as did a master machinist, and, on a more modest level, an expert carpenter-builder.

Within the project area, native-born Americans dominated professional and managerial level positions, other white-collar jobs, and those privileged places on the economic ladder held by "Capitalists." Closely rivaling native-born Americans in their upward mobility were German-born immigrants who owned and operated many of the corner business properties.

In the 1880s, specific West Oakland streets acted as boundaries that defined socio-economic status as reflected in occupation. The 1880 Census confirmed that property east of Adeline had far more residents with professional, managerial-level, and other white-collar jobs than those who lived on blocks west of Adeline. With a few exceptions, property along Seventh Street and south of that transportation corridor belonged to the blue-collar laboring community of immigrant Irish, Portuguese, and Italians. By the time of the 1889 Sanborn maps, the few large homes built along Seventh Street in the late 1870s and early 1880s were no longer the residences of their original owners; by the time of the 1902 Sanborn Map, these houses had been replaced with commercial buildings.

Simply put, the community of homes built closer to the sprawling railroad yards on the Point, and those south of Seventh Street, near the industries located directly along the Estuary, had the most affordable housing. Only one block north of Seventh, on sites facing Goss and Shorey, homes were noticeably larger and frequently set back from the street on large lots. Plates 31 and 32 demonstrate these differences.

But even allowing for these specific street boundaries, the melting-pot character of ethnic groups in West Oakland held true in 1880. Although with a very few exceptions, professional

and managerial occupations held by native-born Americans appeared only on Blocks 1 through 10, these same blocks contained many immigrant residents working as semi-skilled or unskilled laborers.

For an example of how streets functioned as boundaries, on Block 1 in 1880, the census revealed that Sixth and Grove streets were more affluent; among the residents living here could be found the superintendent of the California Nail Factory, the superintendent of the Oakland Gas Light Company, the owner of the large Washington Brewery, a deputy marshall, a merchant, an assayer, and a wholesale milliner who worked in San Francisco. These heads of household were either native-born Americans or German immigrants. Around on Fifth Street, near Grove, lived a capitalist and a miner (both born in New Hampshire); but the census recorded that next door to the New England miner, lived a black railroad porter from Pennsylvania with a mulatto servant as a boarder. Closer to Castro Street was the home of an Irish sewer worker and his large family. Directly around the corner from Fifth, on Castro Street, could be found three small row-houses occupied by a letter carrier, a teamster, and a shoe-store clerk (second-generation Irish or Canadian-born). The 1889 Sanborn Map shows the larger homes on double and triple lots along Sixth and Grove, and small cottages on narrow lots along Fifth and Castro streets.

This same economic spatial pattern holds true for other project blocks east of Market: a mixture of blue-collar laboring residents living in small cottages along one street, and around the corner, in larger homes on double lots, people who held white-collar and managerial positions--some of whom employed Chinese servants. All but one of the Chinese servants found in the 1880 Census within the project area lived and worked in homes east of Market Street; the exception lived east of Adeline Street.

The observations above only hold true for the 1880s. By 1900 and more especially by 1910, the heavy influx of European immigrants spread throughout the survey area, and residents holding the kinds of professional and white-collar jobs held by native-born Americans in the 1880s are rarely found.

African Americans in West Oakland: The beginnings of an African-American population on the Point are recorded by the WPA historians' accounts of Oakland religious organizations:

> During the spring of 1858, when a small mission was organized in a small house on 5th Street (near the Point) by Mr. and Mr. Isaac Flood, Mrs. John Peterson and others . . . in 1863 a building, located at 7th and Market was purchased which had formerly been a school house--built by Mr. Carpentier for the city a number of years before [Hinkel and McCann 1939 [2]:418].

It is possible that this early small African-American community may have lived on project Blocks 22 and 23 in the early 1860s. "The earliest published Oakland city directory in 1869 lists 11 black breadwinners--with two at the Point" (Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey 1990 [2]:50).

It is obvious from the 1900 census that African-American renters and homeowners lived throughout the project area. Although generally they did not board in the hotels along Seventh Street in 1900, a number of railroad porters boarded with white households. By 1910 the census enumerator counted 180 heads of household and adult wage earners as either black or mulatto--a dramatic increase from the six families in 1880. By 1910 most African-American families in the project area took in boarders. Along Seventh Street, lodging houses had a mixture of residents as counted in the census: for example, the Pullman Hotel, on Block 24, had 13 white and 14 black lodgers; all three lodging houses on Block 25 had both black and white residents.

Economics of Survival

For most of the newly arrived immigrants, the most pressing day-to-day concerns became finding a cheap place to live that was close to work, and earning enough to feed what was frequently a large family. The powerful presence of the railroad as West Oakland's largest employer attracted many immigrant laborers, who could work as railroad hands even before they could speak English.

For example, the 1910 Census revealed more than 100 newly arrived Greek immigrants living in box cars on the tracks at the end of Seventh Street. They were all single men who had immigrated in 1907-08. Vernon Sappers described these railroad living quarters.

> Out-fitter cars. And they were very plain inside--just wooden bunks stacked one on top another. One other railroad car would be fixed up with a stove for a cook and a place to serve food. The company could move these cars anywhere along the tracks that repair work was needed. It would have been the lowest paying kind of work, but what they earned would have included a free place to sleep and three meals a day [Sappers/Olmsted interview, April 20, 1993].

Many of these new arrivals were families who rented their four- and five-room houses for $10 a month in the period from 1890-1910. When there were young children, the wives sometimes worked in their homes, taking in laundry to wash, mending, and sewing. Renting a room to a lodger brought in about $5-6 a month. When there were no children, or the children grew old enough to fend for themselves, frequently the wives worked outside the home--as did at least some of the older children. West Oakland had a number of moderate-sized industries in which women and children could find employment.

For most native-born Americans brought up in the 19th century, it was not generally the accepted custom for married women to work outside the home, nor was it desirable for children to go to work at the age of 8 or 10. But the fact that some employment opportunities existed for almost every member of the family made it possible for families to survive at a time when the general going wage for able-bodied men was 10 cents an hour. Children were usually paid 5 cents an hour or on a piece work scale. Women were either paid by pieces completed, or they

earned from 40 cents to a dollar a day, depending on their experience and skills. "Oakland employers had set a ten-cents-an-hour wage scale for all kinds of work, whether it was longshoring, coal-heaving, ditch-digging, or whatever; which meant that a man working the usual six-day week, twelve-hour day could earn $7.20 a week" (O'Connor 1964:54). This wage scale appears to have been in place from 1880 up through 1910. Given that barely subsistence pay rate for male heads of families, it became essential for various family members to earn money in as many ways as possible.

Vernon Sappers' father was employed in 1898 as junior draftsman in his first job for the Southern Pacific at 10 cents an hour, or about $30 a month.

> In order to support our family my father worked extra hours as a cabinet maker, going out to make his estimates at night. I marveled at the way he did it--he never wrote anything down, but kept all those exact measurements in his head and then coming home he would build those wooden cabinets in his shop in the basement of our house. I used to go with him sometimes and I really admired him for his ability with figures. My mother worked as a tailor at Kahn's department store. I went to Manzanita and Garfield schools and concentrated on my studies. I had seen really poor people in West Oakland, and I knew we weren't poor. I would often thank God for my family in my prayers, and for providing for me [Sappers/Olmsted interview, March 24, 1993].

Of the major employers of West Oakland immigrant families, the Contra Costa Laundry at Fourteenth and Kirkham was one of the biggest and oldest (1857) steam laundries on the West Coast--employing 300 people, mostly women and children. A reporter for the *Oakland Tribune* described the laundry in 1887:

> To get some idea of the size of this operation let the reader pause and contemplate ten to twelve thousand men's shirts going through every style of cleansing and manipulation every week . . . it is not difficult to figure on 40,000 handkerchiefs, about 2,500 suits of underclothes and ladies' raiment incalculable. . . . the laundry employs seven seamstresses who do nothing but darn the bachelors' socks, put on buttons, and do the mending . . . . In the mattress department, curled [horse] hair is renovated and made over, washed and repicked. The steamships and railroads will sometimes send over 300 mattresses to be made over in 48 hours . . . . Most of the hands eat at the laundry restaurant which is an economical convenience to employers and employees and which seems to give perfect satisfaction to all the machinists, wringers, ironers, starchers and finishers [January 30, 1887].

Women in the laundry could expect to make from 9 to 12 dollars a week doing piece-work during days that started by 8 a.m. and could end as late as 9 p.m. Jack London worked in a laundry; his step-sister worked at the Contra Costa Laundry in 1886:

> By three in the afternoon the strain of the piece-workers in the humid, heated room grew tense. Elderly women gasped and sighed; the color went out of the cheeks of the

young women, their faces became drawn and dark circles formed under their eyes; but all held on with weary, unabated speed. The tireless, vigilant forewoman kept a sharp lookout for incipient hysteria, and once led a narrow-chested, stoop-shouldered young thing out of the place in time to prevent her collapse [1913a:114-115].

Eleven-hour or 12-hour days were standard in many factories as well as laundries, but (in what may have been the first local union to have allowed women to be members) the Oakland Laundry Workers' Union managed to reduce the number of working daylight hours: "With aid from San Francisco, the Oakland Laundry Workers' Union built a membership of several hundred and established a nine-hour day in 1903" (Knight 1960:130).

Another large employer that hired whole families in 1887 was the California Jute Mill, which employed "100 girls, 100 boys, and 175 other employees"; the company noted that "the girls earn 40 cents a day at first, and becoming more expert can average $40 a month, although some have made as high as $55 at times." Part of the description of the mill's process gives a picture of working conditions for children:

> The immense department in which there are spinning frames is very interesting. Here numbers of children in squads, each squad under a foreman, are working at the "dorfers" engaged in taking off full spindles and putting on empty spools. They rest in the interval of the carting away for the full spindles and the arrival of the baskets of empty ones, but are recalled to work by the blowing of the foreman's whistle, doing all their labor by signal, to be heard above the noise of spinning.
>
> In some instances whole families are employed at the frames, the mother acting as forewoman. They put on the empty bobbins and adjust the threads two or three adroit twists and work away until the bobbins are full. . . . There are 135 looms in operation, weaving burlap. The buzz is incessant and passing down the long line, the visitor sees the material for potato bags, grain bags, borax bags, matting for stairways and offices and the wide cloth for hop bags being turned out as fast as machinery can complete them. All the girls, with few exceptions, in the weaving department were imported from Scotland, this being the most skilled work in the whole mill [*Oakland Tribune*, January 30, 1887].

Jack London also toiled for many long hours in this jute mill, which he describes in the article "The Apostate," published in the *Woman's Home Companion* in September 1906:

> He worked mechanically. When a small bobbin ran out, he used his left hand for a brake, stopping the large bobbin and at the same time, with thumb and forefinger, catching the flying end of twine. Also, at the same time, with his right hand, he caught up the loose twine-end of the small bobbin . . . . Johnny's bobbins were running full blast. . . . His apathetic face was expressionless as he listened to himself being held up as a shining example. He was the perfect worker. He knew that. He had been told so, often. It was a commonplace, and besides it didn't seem to mean anything to him anymore. From the perfect worker he had evolved into the perfect machine. When his work went wrong, it was with him as the machine, due to a faulty material. It would

have been as possible for perfect nail-die to cut imperfect nails as for him to make a mistake.

And small wonder. There had never been a time when he had not been in intimate relationship with machines. Machinery had almost been bred into him, and at any rate he had been brought up on it. Twelve years before, there had been a small flutter of excitement in the loom room of this very mill. Johnny's mother had fainted. They stretched her out on the floor in the midst of shrieking machines. A couple of elderly women were called from their looms. The foreman assisted. And in a few minutes there was one more soul in the loom room than had entered by the doors.

It was Johnny, born with pounding, crashing roar of the looms in his ears, drawing with his first breath the warm, moist air that was thick with flying lint. He had coughed that first day in order to rid his lungs of the lint; and for the same reason he had coughed ever since [London quoted in Walker 1987:202-203].

There were two paper-box factories that employed women and children in the 1880s and 1890s: the Eagle Box Factory at Market, near First Street, and the Union Pulp and Paper Company at 534 Fourteenth Street. The Hodkins Glove Factory at 1710 Seventh Street employed West Oakland women for more than half a century, starting in about 1880.

From 1905 through 1910, major employers of West Oakland women and girls were the canneries, built near the railroad tracks to facilitate shipping.

The Oakland Preserving Company at 110 Linden originated the Del Monte trademark, alluding to the Del Monte Hotel. By 1900, the cannery was known as California Fruit Canners Association Factory No. 5, the Oakland Preserving Company and 17 other canneries having merged into that company. According to the 1901 Sanborn map the factory occupied the whole south half of the block . . . with a cannery, warehouse, and coal shed, and had from 200 to 500 employees . . . . "sorter in the cannery"--here or at Lew Hing's Pacific Coast Cannery, 111-99 Pine Street--was a major occupation of West Oakland women and girls in the 1910 census [Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey 1990 (3):serial number A-156].

In 1903-04, Lew Hing organized the Pacific Coast Canning Company in Oakland with a capital stock of $50,000. The company canned many varieties of fruits and vegetables--peaches, pears, apricots, cherries, grapes, asparagus, tomatoes--which it sold under the label "Buckskin." Lew Hing's cannery was a major employer of Chinese, Portuguese and Italians in West Oakland; as early as 1905, the company had 300 employees, and by 1911 it was one of Oakland's largest businesses, with 1,000 employees at peak season (mostly women). By 1914 . . . it was the third largest canning company on the West Coast [Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey 1990 (2): serial number A-220].

For women who spoke English there was easier work than sorting, pitting, and peeling fruit; a better paying job might be found at Kahn Brothers at the corner of Washington and Twelth. Kahns had been in business since 1876; by 1887 they employed "twenty-five to thirty sewing girls who may always be seen hard at work on their sewing machines, bright, happy and

contented . . . turning out more millinery, fancy dry goods, cloaks and suits than any other establishment in Alameda County" (*Oakland Tribune*, January 30, 1887). It was at Kahns that Vernon Sappers' mother worked as a tailor in the alteration department in the 1920s and 1930s; he recalls:

> She did fine needlework and embroidery, but for Kahns she was an expert tailor. And when they wanted someone to handle tailoring for a special customer from Piedmont, they would call for my mother. I remember one New Year's Eve, she got this call from the manager at Kahns to help with an emergency. A Piedmont customer had a fancy dress delivered with the lining in one sleeve sewn in all twisted. The manager came by and picked my mother up and drove her there to fix it on New Year's Eve. They gave her a twenty-dollar gold piece. I want to tell you that was something special in those days [Sappers/Olmsted interview, April 18, 1993].

Many women who did fine embroidery, trimmed the elaborate hats of the times, or could cut and sew dresses, worked at home. The 1901 Oakland city directory lists 96 dressmakers and 20 milliners working out their homes, with a predominance of married women (many of whom would have been widows). For enterprising beginners, or those who wished to make their own patterns, there was the McDowell Dress Cutting School and Dressmaking Parlors at 1018 Washington. In 1901, 94 nurses were listed in Oakland, and 81 of those were women, with an equal number of single and married listings. Women worked in some of the 71 Oakland bakeries, of which 25 were listed in the city directory as owned by women. And women worked in small operations, such as William Vondebell's pickle factory at the corner of Third and Lewis, on Block 17. Lodging and boarding houses were often run by women, but for many south of Seventh Street households, renting out a room for $5 to $6 a month without meals, or for $10 to $14 a month with meals, remained the quickest way to pick up some extra money.

For the men who did not work for the railroad, there was work to be found in the lumber yards and large planing mills, such as the California Sash and Door or the Pacific Coast Planing Mill; or they could work as machinists and blacksmiths in the Pacific Nail Works or the Oakland Iron Works. Within the project area, the mostly frequently chosen trade listed by men in the 1880 Census was that of carpenter. Many of these woodworkers would have been railroad carpenters, but many others specified "house carpenter" to the census taker. The ability to communicate readily and easily may have been especially important for carpenters. Of the 69 carpenters listed as living within the project area in 1880, 50 were born in the United States, and only 4 were born in countries where a language other than English was spoken. It is also possible that the Carpenters' Protective Union, one of the first very strong trade unions in West Oakland, had an ethnic bias in giving membership preference to American-born carpenters.

Italians found work as stone cutters and also took over the scavenger business in Oakland (Gumina 1978:139). Irish and British immigrants filled many jobs as teamsters, driving for the more than 20 Oakland livery stables, or the 15 express and delivery companies.

Plate 33: Oakland Estuary--Safe Winter Haven . . . From the 1880s up through 1929, the Oakland Estuary became a safe winter haven for two large fleets of sailing vessels: the Alaska Packers fleet of wooden and iron sailing ships and barks; and the whaling fleet that sailed from San Francisco each spring, at a time when that city was the largest whaling port in the United States. Each large fleet sailed north in the spring to fish: the salmon fishing ended in late August, but the whalers hunted the giant cetaceans until the winter ice began to form and it became too dangerous to stay longer. When they returned to San Francisco to unload their catch, the big square-rigged vessels required a safe winter haven, away from the turbulence and high winds of the fierce Pacific storms. Both fishing industries saw the last of the age of commercial sailing vessels, and the Oakland Estuary became an unforgettable sight, with hundreds of wintering wooden and iron vessels, many of them 50 to 70 years old of a design no longer built.

Whalers followed much the same seasonal route as the salmon fleet, but they travelled farther north, whaling in Arctic waters and sometimes wintering over at Herschell Island. Whaling, although it could be more lucrative, involved longer voyages and more dangerous work in open boats on high seas. In the spring, whalers laid in supplies, spending from $15,000 to $40,000 per vessel. Each ship usually carried from three to five boats with five to seven men per boat, plus five to ten extra men, including the cook, steward, carpenter, and, to make the whale-oil barrels, a cooper. It took 35 days to get to the Arctic and 20 days to get home, with seven months in the whaling grounds. The whalers greatest peril was to become locked in by ice--a number of these vessels were lost when they were forced to winter over. But for those seamen willing to sign on, there was considerable money to made in shares of the take of whale-oil and baleen. In 1882 whalebone was worth $2.50 a pound and the season's catch brought back to San Francisco was 354,000 pounds, or $885,000 (Hittell 1882:562). Baleen is the bone from the whale's jaw; its primary use was for stays in women's corsets. San Francisco became the largest whaling port in the world between 1885 until 1905.

Crew lists on American whaling ships throughout the 19th century show a predominance of Portuguese. Many listed their place of origin as the Azores; other Portuguese signed on as whalers in Hawaii. Portuguese were adept at deepwater sailing for whales, and also were accustomed to the dangerous necessity of taking small boats out to harpoon whales.

Master Mariner William T. Shorey, a whaling master from Barbados, settled on Oakland Point and married Julia Ann Shelton, an African American. The Shorey family lived at 1782 Eighth Street, just one block north of the survey area. From 1886 until his retirement in 1912, Captain Shorey served as master on the whalers, *Emma F. Herriman, Alexander, Andrew Hicks, Gay Head,* and the *John and Winthrop.*

(San Francisco Maritime National Historic Park)

Plate 34: The Alaska Packers' Fleet in the Oakland Estuary, circa 1900 . . . The Alaska Packers were formed in 1893 with an agreement that merged many small Alaska canneries. It was a time when the waters of the Pacific Northwest teemed with salmon in relatively inaccessible fishing grounds during the short but lucrative summer season. All the fishermen, cannery workers, provisions, and supplies had to be brought north across more than 2,000 miles of open sea each spring. Headquarters of the Alaska Packers Association was in Alameda. "The Association maintained its own dockyard in the Oakland Estuary and here, in winter, the whole fleet would be laid up, as repairs and alterations were effected. Men who later became masters of American ships, both sail and steam, found employment as riggers, shipwrights, and sailors in maintenance crews in the yard at Paru Street in Alameda" (Huycke in *Yachting*, February 1960).

Each spring it was necessary to transport all of the fishermen, and all of the salmon cleaners and packers for the canneries. Old sailing ships in good condition were plentiful and comparatively cheap--some were owned by the association outright, many more were chartered from year to year. The Scandinavian and German fisherman also served as deepwater sailors on the voyages to Alaska and back; the Portuguese and Italian fishermen were transported to and from the fishing grounds, as many as 150 men at a time in a single vessel. Travelling with them were 50 to 60 Chinese to pack the salmon and operate the canneries. Each ethnic group carried its preferred food and cooks, who set up their stoves in different parts of the ship.

Fishermen for these large sailing operations were recruited from San Francisco and Oakland. Axel Widerstrom recalled, "They sent someone to make the rounds of North Beach restaurants and bars and rounded up Italian fishermen (Widerstrom/Kortum interview June, 1958). Most of the Portuguese fishermen would have been found in Oakland, at that time the center for Portuguese immigrants in northern California (Vas 1965:63). Scandinavian and German fishermen-sailors generally found lodgings in San Francisco, close to the waterfront. It is less certain where the Chinese cannery workers would have been recruited, but given Oakland's large Chinese-owned cannery operations after 1903, local workers familiar with canning fruit could have made the transition to packing salmon.

The seasonal nature of fishing in northern waters also made it likely that census enumerators, traditionally knocking on doors in June, would have rarely located the men who had signed on whalers or were on their way north to fish in Alaskan waters for salmon. Since many of these same men took rooms as lodgers only when they were in port, they were just as likely to be omitted from city directories. What we know about these men comes from oral histories and crew lists.

(San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park)

In the 1880s several of San Francisco's most respected ship and boat builders moved to the quiet waters of the Oakland Estuary, where mudflat land was far cheaper than San Francisco beaches, and plentiful labor was close at hand. Alexander Hay, Middlemas and Boole, and the famous Dickie brothers from Scotland built the very largest wooden and steel vessels at the foot of Adeline Street on the Estuary, and over on the Alameda shore. These boatyards employed skilled shipwrights, carpenters, painters, and metal workers, with less-skilled men to scrape, caulk, repair, and copper the bottoms of vessels in dry dock.

For Portuguese, Italian, and Chinese immigrants, there was year-round fishing on San Francisco Bay. Portuguese and Italians signed on for seasonal summer fishing with the great fleet of Alaska Packers' sailing vessels that wintered over in the protected Oakland Estuary, returning to Alaska each spring. Part of this fleet can be seen in Plate 34. From the 1880s through 1929, in a fleet that numbered from 10 to 20 ships and barks, each of the big wooden sailing vessels carried from 100 to 200 fishermen north for the summer, to fish for salmon. Hundreds of Mexican and Chinese cannery workers sailed north in this same fleet to put up the tons of salmon caught by the fishermen. Scandinavian seamen were taken on to handle the big sails, as working ship-crews, but they also made additional money fishing in Alaskan waters for the salmon and cod. Whalers, as seen in Plate 33, spent their winters on the creek getting repairs for an early spring start to the Arctic.

All of this maritime activity happened within an easy walk to West Oakland and afforded a wide variety of seasonal, as well as full-time jobs. It was at a waterfront saloon that Jack London got his job aboard the *Sophia Sutherland* when he had just turned 17. Typically, this three-masted wooden schooner was being outfitted in the Oakland Estuary for a 7-month voyage to Japan to hunt for seals. London had been an oyster pirate with his own boat at the age of 15, and a year later he was invited to join the California Fish Patrol to hunt down illegal fishermen--many of whom he knew first-hand.

Life in the House on Pine Street: Jack London's many journalistic books and his own biographers' descriptions have made it possible to understand how the economics of survival affected the quality of life within a specific house within the project area, on Block 20. At 807 Pine Street was the house where Jack London lived in 1887, when he was 11 and 12 years old. A view of this small cottage can be seen in Plate 3, together with the house that the London family lived in near Seventh and Adeline, seen in Plate 4. For a time, the London family lived in four small back-rooms in the fruit and vegetable shop run by London's step-father at an unidentified address. Frank Atherton, one of Jack's boyhood friends, described a family meal at 807 Pine:

> Supper was served in the kitchen. While Mr. London carved the beefsteak and cut the bread, I glanced about the room. The furnishings were plain but serviceable; a wood and coal stove, portable cupboard, bare wooden chairs and a drop leaf table at which

> we sat. The floor was bare but clean from frequent scrubbing. On the stove I observed the iron skillet used for beefsteak and potatoes. From one side a large section was missing, evidently having been broken sometime in the past. I wondered if they were too poor to buy a new one. Afterwards, however, I learned they had a new skillet but Mrs. London preferred the broken one. She claimed that the steak cooked in it had a superior flavor.
>
> Our meal consisted of beefsteak, fried potatoes, bread and butter and coffee. There was plenty for all. There was no desert, neither was there any pretense of style, newspapers being used in lieu of a tablecloth, which also indicated poor circumstances [Kingman 1979:33].

In 1913, in *The Valley of the Moon*, London described this small cottage on Pine Street as the first home of newly wed Bill and Saxon Roberts:

> On Pine Street, between Fifth and Fourth, and in immediate proximity to the great Southern Pacific railroad yards, Billy and Saxon rented a neat cottage of four small rooms for ten dollars a month. . . .
>
> "How much do you figure it will cost to furnish the house, carpets on the floor, linoleum on the kitchen, and all?"
>
> "We can do it nicely for three hundred dollars," she answered. . .
>
> "Three hundred, say at six per cent--that'd be six cents to the dollar, sixty cents on ten dollars, six dollar on the hundred, on three hundred--eighteen dollars. . . . Hold on--that ain't all. That'd be the interest on the furniture for four rooms . . . . Next Saturday afternoon you gotta get off from the laundry so as we can go an' buy our furniture. I saw Salinger's last night. I give'm fifty down, and the rest installment plan, ten dollars a month. In twenty-five months the furniture's our'n. An' remember . . . you wanta buy everything you want, no matter how much it costs" [1913a:99-101].

The cottage on Pine Street consisted of a front parlor that contained a Morris chair; at seven and a half dollars, it was the most expensive piece of furniture in the house. In the kitchen was a coal stove where, in peace and privacy, "with her own tub and towels and soap, and with no one to say her nay, Saxon was guilty of a daily orgy. It was only a common washtub that she placed on the kitchen floor and filled by hand; but it was a luxury that had taken her twenty-four years to achieve" (London 1913a:131).

In addition to their own bedroom, the fourth back room, which stood empty at first, was furnished as a bedroom for $50. Later, during the teamster strike when Billy had no money coming in, Saxon rented that back room for $6 a month to a railroad fireman working a night shift, who needed a quiet place, with no children, so he could sleep during the day.

Perhaps in reaction to London's own upbringing, in which he had to turn over all of his earnings to his mother--not even being allowed to keep the three dollars he had saved to buy a skiff to sail on the estuary--the wife in *The Valley of the Moon* insisted that her husband keep some of his teamster wages for spending money of his own. In the meantime, without discussing the matter with her husband, London's heroine began to sell her fancy embroidery and lacy

breakfast caps at a Sutter Street store in San Francisco. Even so, there were bad financial times, when the economics of survival meant cutting back on food, both in quality and quantity:

> The table she set had scarcely anything in common with that of their first married year. Not only was every item of cheaper quality, but many items had disappeared. Meat, and the poorest, was very seldom on the table. Cow's milk had given place to condensed milk, and even the sparing use of the latter had ceased. A roll of butter when they had it, lasted half a dozen times as long as formerly. Where Billy had been used to drinking three cups of coffee at breakfast, he now drank one. Saxon boiled this coffee an atrocious length of time, and she paid twenty cents a pound for it. . . . Saxon was behind a month's rent, which, when it is considered that rent was paid in advance, was equivalent to two months. . . . she was three months behind in the installments on the furniture . . . their collector said, "My orders is to make you dig up every cent I can and at the same time not to be too hard . . . . try to see if you can't scrape up five dollars by next week" [London 1913a:200-222].

Frank Roney, an out-of-work foundry man living in similar circumstances in a small cottage in San Francisco, wrote in his diary of his anger when the furniture store sent moving men to take back his three pieces of furniture when his installment payments dropped behind. "They shoved my wife roughly off the rocking chair to take that, too" (Roney 1877:n.p.). In *Martin Eden*, Jack London details numerous different trips to the pawnshop to borrow money with one of his two suits, his overcoat, and his bicycle. He could not pawn his typewriter because he rented it from month to month. London's pawnshop was Treager's Loan Office at 862 Washington Street, between Seventh and Eighth, where he received $5 for his "Rambler Bicycle" with "Interest Must be Paid Monthly" (Kingman 1979:95). In 1881-1883, one pawnbroker, M. Levy & Company, is listed in the Oakland city directory at 809 Broadway. By 1901 there are no pawnbrokers advertised, but 13 "loan offices" are listed in the city directory, mostly on Broadway or in downtown Oakland.

London writes of the various ways of supplementing reduced family income available to West Oakland families. Oakland's estuary, with its extensive rocky mudflats, afforded clams and mussels for the digging. "Like the Italian and Portuguese women, she gathered driftwood and carried it home, though always she did with shamed pride, timing her arrival so that it would be after dark" (London 1913a:258). When the economics of survival had reached this low point, Jack London introduced his character's central insight: *"Oakland is just a place to start from.* All of their troubles were the troubles of a trap. Oakland was a trap. Oakland was a good place to start from" (1913a:270).

And many West Oakland families did just that. When they could afford to, they left. They moved away from the railroad yards and industrial area near those yards. According to an African-American scholar, Lawrence Crouchett, "By the 1920s South Berkeley became the prestige address for successful middle-class blacks" (quoted in Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey 1990 [2]:53). New immigrants arriving in 1910 and 1920 looked for the cheapest possible

housing, and found it--renting rooms with families and in lodging-houses near jobs in West Oakland.

When the Great Depression years of the 1930s set in, West Oakland suffered along with the rest of California. The economy was not rescued until World War II when the Moore and Scott Shipyards boomed, and whole waves of shipyard workers--newly arrived in California--streamed into West Oakland, completely changing the ethnic mix. "Between 1942 and 1945, slightly more than 50,000 black people moved to the East Bay . . . newcomers outnumbered the old community by five-to-one. . . . Old houses in West Oakland . . . were suddenly occupied by as many as 50 men, often sleeping in shifts . . . . Families living in small apartments or bungalows took in boarders" (Crouchett, pp 45-49, as quoted in Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey 1990 [2]:54).

19th-Century Capitalists in West Oakland

Oakland city directories in the early 1880s listed 10 men living within the project area as "Capitalists." Since the title used was of their own choosing, it has no precise meaning; generally, a 19th-century capitalist had money available for investment. Investments in California real estate were among the most common and lucrative sources of income and capital. If a man became superintendent or president of his own company, it was customary for the city directory to list his title and his establishment--a modest statement of personal accomplishment. Census enumerators were instructed to write down whatever occupation the respondent gave. For example, Henry Miller listed himself in the 1900 Census in San Francisco as a "butcher." As the biggest land-owner in California's Central Valley, and a millionaire cattle rancher as well, he must have had his own private joke.

Of the ten self-styled "capitalists" living within the project area, seven were born in the United States; of these, five were known to have had American-born parents; while one American capitalist had English-born parents. Only Diedrich Buhsen, a native of Germany, and George Godfrey, born in London, were foreign-born. The 1880 Census did not enumerate Benjamin F. Smith, who was listed in the city directories as a capitalist from 1884 through 1901. In 1884 he lived at 826 Magnolia Street on Block 9. Tax Assessor records show him as a tenant, not as an owner. Benjamin Smith moved frequently, living at a number of different West Oakland addresses, but not within the project area after 1884.

Other heads of household within the project blocks included native-born men who might have been described as capitalists, such as William Raymond (Block 4), who first listed himself in the city directories as a grain merchant, and later as a grain broker. The 1880s saw the great financial boom in selling wheat from the California Delta regions to be shipped from San Francisco, Oakland, and ports on the Carquinez Straits to every major seaport in Europe. Local commission merchants and brokers frequently made fortunes equal to wealthy wheat farmers

Plate 35: The McDermott Estate in the 1880s . . . The most enduring of the early large homes in West Oakland is seen here with two of Charles McDermott's children, Louis and Florence, posing on the gravel driveway. "The MacDermott children had two governesses. Two highly cultured and refined spinsters who hailed from England" (*West of Market Boy's Journal*, Dr. Ed Anthony, June 1941). An 1878 newspaper description places the home in the center of four long walkways that meandered in a natural but artful fashion through groves of oaks, pines, and pepperwood trees, and under vine-covered arbors and rose-covered trellis work. "One may look in vain for any plan to produce a striking view of the house from the street, all efforts in that direction being for the benefit of the residents, rather than the public at large" (*Oakland Times*, August 10, 1878).

The McDermott estate appears on the Snow & Roos 1870 bird's-eye view, occupying an entire block along Seventh Street from Center to Cypress. The owners were fairly self-sufficient, with water-tanks on the tower at the far left, and a stable for the Alderney cow and Hambletonian mare, not to mention vegetable and cut-flower gardens with a greenhouse. Concealed behind its park of trees and shrubs, the old McDermott place gradually became neglected and thickly overgrown with vines. It remained intact until it was leveled for temporary housing for World War II.

Charles McDermott's fortune derived from San Francisco real estate. His son, Louie "Mac" McDermott, a gifted machinist, devoted himself to producing perfect replicas of railroad equipment--of a scale that allowed adults and children to ride on miniature track.

(From the collection of Vernon J. Sappers)

during the decade of grain trade. William Raymond was born in New Hampshire, as were his parents.

On Block 23 lived Capt. F.E. Wines, a sea captain born in New York of parents from the same state. His son, Charles Wines, was an inspector in the Customs House in San Francisco--a well-paying job that was sought after because of its potential for financial gain, legal and otherwise.

Capt. Samuel James first listed himself in the city directories as a master mariner--hence his title--but later listed himself a "Capitalist." The earliest reference to him, in the *Oakland Daily News* of July 27, 1874, notes that the Grand Western Hotel, built in the fall of 1873 by Capt. S. James, was a great success, as conducted by Mrs. Hornblower, with a clean and ample restaurant run by Mr. Little; all eight shops were generally occupied. The James Block can be seen on the 1889 Sanborn Map on Block 25 and in Plate 45. Captain James listed himself in residence here in 1883 as a "Capitalist." The *West of Market Boys' Journal* asked: "Do you remember old Captain James who had a rooming house at 7th and Wood, and the fireworks and races around the block for prizes that he always had as a celebration on the 4th of July?" (September 18, 1937). In another edition of the same journal, Dr. Edward Anthony wrote, "The corner is known as the James Block. You see that little old man with the white bow tie and plug hat? That is Captain S. James, owner of the building. That is Mrs. Hornblower, who runs the Grand Western Hotel, upstairs in that building." Captain James was born in Massachusetts of parents born in England.

Also on Block 25 was Pliny Bartlett, sometimes listed as a "Capitalist" and other times as Superintendent of the Contra Costa Laundry, of which he was the principal owner. In 1872 Pliny Bartlett built four moderately large houses on double lots, occupying the corner of Pine and Seventh, and extending east for about one-third of Block 25:

> On the northeast corner of 7th and Pine were four houses facing the 7th Street built by Pliny Bartlett who lived in the corner house. Later [1882] Bartlett built his family a pretentious home on Franklin Street [1311 Franklin]. . . .The four houses at 7th and Pine were eventually replaced by the building that stands there today. The corner store is now occupied by Herman Frisch, the cigar maker. He has been there for more than 46 years. On the 4th of July each year Bartlett would put on a street party at 7th and Pine [*Oakland Tribune,* November 7, 1954].

As Superintendent of the Contra Costa Laundry, Bartlett ran the largest and oldest steam laundry on the West Coast, employing between 250 and 300 people, mostly women and children. From 1858 through the 1890s, dirty laundry arrived from San Francisco by boat, to be delivered to Barlett's laundry.

> Mr. Pliny Bartlett . . . has invented a revolving cylinder which does all the finishing glossy work on collars and cuffs . . . . The Bartlett machine is a hollow cylinder about four feet in diameter with pegs in the side, which lifts the clothes up and lets them fall

> down again with every revolution . . . with twelve thousand men shirts going through the washing and starching and ironing every week, one can imagine the satisfaction with such a device [*Oakland Tribune,* January 30, 1887].

The Bartlett machine was locally manufactured by master machinist Ives Scoville. By 1882 Bartlett was also a partner with Hallett, Bartlett, and Dalton, who specialized in the manufacturing of agricultural implements. His profits from the laundry business, agricultural implements, and early real-estate investments qualified him as a 19th-century capitalist. His place of birth and parentage were not identified.

Ives Scoville is mentioned as living in West Oakland as early as 1865, when he solicited donations from door-to-door to fund the building of a local public school. From 1875 to 1886, he is listed in the city directories at 1818 Atlantic Street (Block 20). Various accounts recall him working in a machine shop located in the backyard of his house, where he turned out various custom-made metal tools and machines, many of his own invention. In 1875 he founded the Oakland Iron Works, located at 511 Second Street, and referred to as the "pioneer iron works of Oakland."

> The pioneer in the field was Ives Scoville who opened a machine shop in modest quarters on Second Street, between Washington and Clay as early as 1871, for the manufacturing of farming implements and metal parts of carriages and wagons. By 1875, the growth of patronage warranted an extension of his premises and an increase in personnel. He now called his institution The Oakland Iron Works and undertook to fill orders for small steam engines, pumps, and mill machinery, and the "Climax Side Hill Plow" a product of his own invention. Three years later he was obliged to rent still more ground, having invented (in conjunction with a man named Bartlett) a washing machine. In 1882 he moved the entire plant to the corner of Jefferson and Second streets. Here he installed a larger foundry for turning out heavier castings and improved his equipment at a cost of some $15,000. By 1886, he had added mining machinery to his other products and developed a promising new invention: Scoville's New Hoisting Gear. The shop force now exceeded fifty hands and the products they fabricated included high and low pressure boilers, steam engines, moline engines, rock crushers, quartz mills, and in fact, machinery of nearly every type [Hinkel and McCann 1939 [2]:828].

On August 24, 1886, the *Oakland Enquirer* noted: "Ives Scoffield [sic] at the foot of Jefferson Street has just accepted a sub-contract from the Union Iron Works in San Francisco, for casting the bed-plates for the revolving dome of the Lick Observatory. There will be twenty-two semi-circular castings, each weighing three thousand and forty pounds. This is one of the largest pieces of work ever done in Oakland. The Union Iron Works was compelled by a strike of their workers to put out this contract." The construction of the Lick Observatory involved the finest metal-working artisans of the time, money being no object.

Scoville had been born in New York in 1825, and his father moved to Chicago to establish a machinist's foundry when Ives was 12. Having apprenticed in his father's business, he came

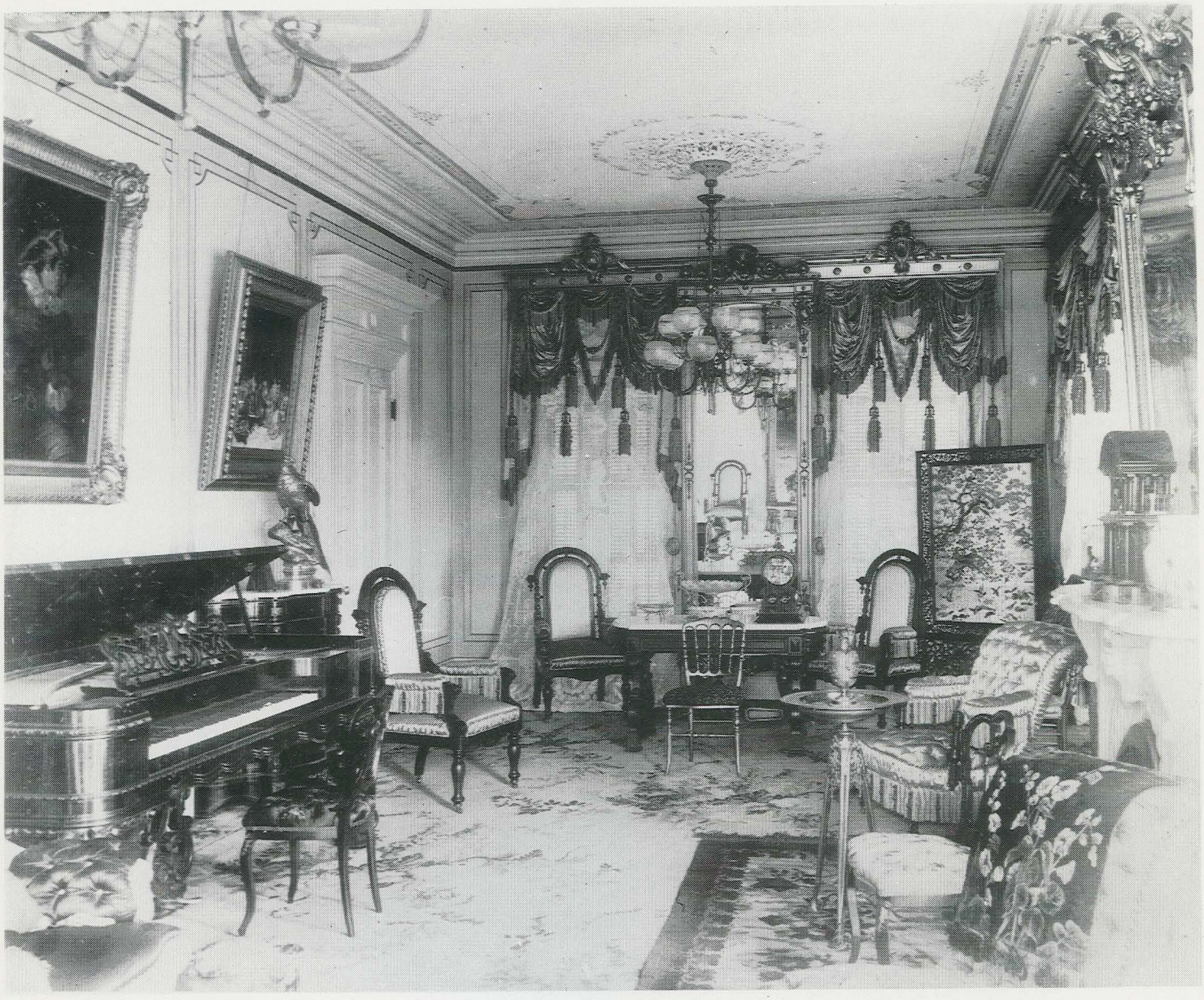

Plate 36: Front Parlor of the McDermott Home in West Oakland . . . The formal front parlor was a mixture of French and Oriental art objects collected and displayed for enjoyment at musicals performed on the concert grand pianoforte. Elaborately draped and tasseled silk curtains over lace panels served no purpose but to please or astonish. Moveable louvered wooden shutters shut out glare, or let in air, as required. Elaborately plastered ceilings were hand-painted in various color schemes in different rooms. The Paris exhibition supplied "costly bric-a-brac." Chinese embroidered silk screens depicted "birds, nearly a hundred in number are represented as flying about or at rest among the flowers. It would seem impossible to produce such delicate shading from one color to another with needle and thread" *(Oakland Times*, August 10, 1878). In its details and in the overall arrangement of its furnishings, the parlor of the McDermott house follows the fashion that Queen Victoria had established with Osborne House on the Isle of Wight in the 1840s. The West of Market Boys recalled in a one-line vernacular of the 1930s, "Remember those grand blow-outs at the McDermott house."

(From the collection of Vernon J. Sappers)

Plate 37: Rear Parlor of the McDermott Home in West Oakland . . . The polished brass fender and inlaid marble of the fireplace would have reflected the cheerful glow of the wood fire in the family room, where carefully dressed dolls have their portraits taken in the children's fireside chairs. Family pictures crowd every surface, as do favorite quotations and poems expressed in calligraphy and preserved in Chinese silk-embroidered frames. Against the back wall is the complete home office of a type that so fascinated gadget-loving Victorians. A writing desk in the center is framed with pigeon holes for bills to be paid and letters to be answered; glass doors protect the sets of elaborately bound volumes of uplifting biographies and encyclopedias that detail information for would-be world travellers. All of this organized activity is topped with three useful lockable drawers, and at least two rows of shelves display treasured souvenirs.

The furniture in the back parlor is an eclectic combination of rattan from China (also popular in France); what appears to an American walnut console, or game table, with drawers; an upholstered platform rocker; and simple ladder-back rocking chairs with cane seats. The walls are stenciled with leaves and fern fronds for an indoor garden effect, and the wool carpet has a formal sea-shell motif. All in all, the back parlor gives the impression of a decidedly feminine collector who could afford to indulge her taste for hand-painted plates and Oriental embroidered silk art objects.

(From the collection of Vernon J. Sappers)

to California in 1863. By 1883 he was married with two sons (Wood 1883:972). Frank Scoville continued his father's trade as late at 1929, when he advertised the "Scoville Machine Works" on Piedmont Avenue in Oakland (Peace Officers' Assoc. of State of California 1929:55)

William S. Pelouze, listed himself as a "Capitalist" in the Oakland city directories of the early 1880s. Pelouze established his home at 1773 Seventh Street as early as 1876, and was still in residence in 1901 (Calderwood 1896:126). His house is described by the *West of Market Boys' Journal* as "one of the most pretentious homes in the neighborhood" (Dr. Ed Anthony, February 1937). His estate can been seen set back from Seventh Street on Block 23 on the 1889 Sanborn Map.

By 1899 William Pelouze had been a member of the Alameda County Board of Supervisors for 12 years. Born in Boston in 1828, William Pelouze became a type-founder at the age of 12, making the lead castings of individual characters then used in printing by apprenticing in his father's type-foundry before he went to sea at the age of 15. How he made his fortune is uncertain, but he mined for gold on the Little Fork of the American River in 1852. Going back East to marry Miss Laura Loud, he settled first in San Francisco, where he established a successful type-foundry on Merchant Street, before moving to Oakland in 1876 (*Oakland Tribune* 1899:190). The 1884 Tax Assessor's records show that all 12 lots between Seventh and Fifth and Wood and Pine streets were owned by Laura Pelouze. The name W. S. Pelouze appears on a number of different real-estate parcels in West Oakland.

George Godfrey, a West Oakland capitalist of the 1880s, made his fortune in San Francisco's Gold Rush in the laundry business. He built the Charter Oak Hotel on Block 23 and installed a Chinese laundry next door. He was living one block east of the project area at 1721 Seventh Street in the early 1880s. Godfrey is somewhat effusively described in the 1883 *History of Alameda County:*

> In the summer of 1849 he concluded to seek his fortune in the Gold State, and he accordingly took passage on board the *Leopard*. Coming via Cape Horn, he arrived in San Francisco June 14, 1850. Unlike most of the early Californians, Mr. Godfrey did not make his way to the mines, but located in San Francisco, and engaged in the laundry business in which he was very successful. . . . at the close of fourteen years he found himself possessed of an ample fortune. . . . He opened a real estate office in San Francisco, a business he still continues. . . . He had been a resident of West Oakland but in the summer of 1883 he began the erection of an elegant residence on Market Street, between Ninth and Tenth, in which he will spend the remainder of his days in that comfort which always follows a well-spent and prosperous life [Wood 1883:890].

Godfrey continued making money in the laundry business in 1880, when the census revealed the presence of 17 Chinese workers living at the corner of Bay and the railroad tracks on Block 30 in a "wash-house." The property on which this Chinese laundry operated was owned by George Godfrey in 1884; the laundry had burned by 1889. When his wife of 37 years

died, Godfrey married again and was involved in a divorce sufficiently scandalous to merit this comment in the few lines of his very brief obituary in 1891, entitled: "Pioneer Capitalist Passes Away at Seventy . . . The deceased . . . had accumulated property worth several hundred thousand dollars. He has been married three times and his divorce, from his second wife, was the talk of the community, and is too well known to need recapitulation" *(Oakland Enquirer,* December 29, 1891). According to his 1883 biographer, Godfrey was born in London in 1815, making him 86 at the time of his death.

Perhaps the wealthiest capitalist in West Oakland was millionaire Charles F. McDermott, who died in November of 1898. "The deceased was a very wealthy man, being rated as a millionaire. He was extensively interested in real estate across the bay, from which he derived a very large income. The McDermott residence occupies the block between Seventh and Eighth, Cypress and Center streets. He leaves a widow and four children" (*Oakland Enquirer,* November 22, 1898).

The McDermott estate, which lies just outside the project area, appears on the Snow & Roos bird's-eye view of 1870-71, seen in Plate 8. It would prove to be the most enduring large estate in West Oakland. Plates 35, 36, and 37 show the exterior and interiors of the McDermott place in the 1880s. The *Oakland Times* gave a detailed description of this mansion and its grounds in 1878:

> The place has a half mile or more of walk and drive . . . which may be described as having an avenue running from the house towards each corner. . . . The main lawn faces Eighth Street . . . separated by a low hedge, trimmed with the appearance of sentry boxes at regular distances. . . . The lawn has for a center piece, a fountain of white marble, composed of several basins with the water falling from the smallest above to the larger below . . . different portions sustained by appropriate water animals of the purest white marble. . . . One may look in vain for any plan to produce a striking view from any street, all efforts in this direction being intended for the benefit of the residents, rather than the public at large. All walks and drives are meandering in their lines, wandering from one object to another, and so arranged as to indicate something beyond and just out of view. . . . High lattice work is covered with climbing roses and vines, which separates the poultry yard from the stables, and offices from the lawns . . . the avenue to the south disappears in a cluster of oaks and a grove of pines, and further on a pepperwood tree. . . . Avenues are designed with curves to permit the easy turning of carriages, and are generally bordered with flowers. . . . Occasionally a young Alderny cow. . . may be seen grazing. . . .In the stable is a young Hambletonian mare of great promise.
>
> The house which is about 36 feet square [either an error or a reference to the central section of the house], two stories in height with wings and extensions and verandas gives no indications by its exterior of the wealth, luxury and taste displayed in the interior. The rooms are beautifully frescoed in oil colors, and have elegant French furniture. The windows all have elegant silk hangings with rich curtains to match. In the parlor may be seen a Watteau painting of great value . . . bric a brac from the Paris Exposition. . . . In another room a pair of screens, Chinese work,

> embroidered on white silk . . . birds, nearly a hundred in number are represented flying about and at rest among flowers. . . . In this room and in all rooms are elegant clocks. Mr. McDermott seems determined that the passing of time shall be pleasantly marked [August 10, 1878].

Although the McDermott estate lies just outside the project area, it is mentioned here because of the enduring presence of this elaborate estate in West Oakland, existing only a block away from Seventh Street, albeit concealed from passersby by carefully constructed hedges, arbors, and groves of trees. Rare interior photographs demonstrate Victorian taste for ornamentation and display, in both the formal French front parlor and in the crowded back parlor used every day by the McDermott family. For some time, the income from San Francisco real-state investments allowed Louis "Mac" McDermott (the son of Charles McDermott) to devote himself to crafting scale model railroad equipment in his own machine shops, hidden among the luxuriant vegetation of the mature gardens of his estate. The miniature trains received wide publicity during the 1915 Panama Pacific Exposition, where they carried passengers around the amusement zone.

It was during the depression of the 1930s that Vernon Sappers and his father visited Louis McDermott. By then, there were was no servant to greet visitors, and the cultivated arbors of the 1870s had become densely overgrown:

> We would go down to visit the old McDermott place on Sunday morning. We couldn't get in. We would toss a rock against the side of the house and he would let us in. He would lead us down a secret passage, all overgrown--to me it was like the jungles of Africa. Lots of vines. Ivy. We always went to the machine shop. Mac had a wonderful library out in the barn--all those beautiful books on mechanics. He was a gifted machinist. He built large-scale model trains, big enough for adults to ride on. They were absolutely perfect--real works of machine art. He made his own trucks. My dad helped him build the passenger coaches.
>
> He lived to make his trains. They never seemed to pay any attention to their declining income. Or know what to do about it. So in time they were really poor. Finally, they became paupers and were taken in to live by a man they had lent money to and befriended in the past. They moved into his big estate down near Los Gatos. All those trains went with them [Sappers/Olmsted interview, April 20, 1993].

The McDermott house and its gardens survived until 1942, when the Federal Housing Authority bulldozed the historic estate to build temporary barracks for war workers.

Shared Values and Social Institutions

A Brotherhood of Labor: Trade unions were among the most powerful social institutions in West Oakland, helping to tie the diverse community together. Formal membership in "brotherhoods" of working men was apt to be a unique experience for these newly arrived

Californians. Early newspaper accounts of their meetings in the late 1870s, and throughout the 1880s and 1890s, suggest that the unions borrowed many of their social patterns from the Masonic Lodges--there are Grand Masters and other elaborate Masonic-inspired titles, rituals, and ladies' auxiliaries.

From March through September, throughout the 1880s and 1890s, the *Oakland Enquirer* listed four or five organized picnics by trade union and fraternal orders every Saturday and Sunday at Shellmound Park in Emeryville (Plate 40). San Francisco union members would ride the ferry over to join their Oakland brothers for speeches in the Shellmound grandstand, which could accommodate a crowd of 3,000. Whole families arrived on the local trains carrying picnics to enjoy under the trees; couples could dance on the immense wooden open-air pavilions while the band played from the bandstand. They could show-off at the shooting galleries and bowling alleys. And of course, there was drinking, with much camaraderie, in the beer garden or at the several saloons in the park.

First celebrated in New York in 1882, the Labor Day holiday itself was a new experience for European immigrants, as well as for many Americans. There was no place in Europe where the dignity and solidarity of labor was celebrated with military bands marching past reviewing stands filled with the mayor and all the city officials who wanted to be Labor's friend. On Labor Day in 1891, the conservative *Oakland Tribune* devoted its front page and two other pages to a tribute to the trade unions of Oakland. Excerpts from the reporter's description of the parade are given below:

> The sun shone brightly, while light clouds drifted across the sky now and then, tempering the heat and making the march a pleasure. The workmen seemed to appreciate it. They were proud and happy and jolly all in a breath. There wasn't a disgruntled man in the large concourse. There wasn't a man who did not feel that America was made for the laboring man, and the laboring man for America.
>
> The same feeling actuated the onlookers, who thronged the sidewalks and cheered on the forming marchers. There were mothers watching their boys with fondest eyes, and sweethearts with palpitating hearts shaking their gloved hands, and blushing as they caught the eyes of those in whom their interest centered. There were old men, too, who for years had followed the same trade of the boys they watched today with such great pride.
>
> One old man, bent with age, muttered as he bent over a heavy stick that supported him: "Ah mon, it war different in my day, back in the old country. Thee boys be free. No mon owns them."
>
> Many a mother . . . cried to her neighbor as her son passed by, "Ah look at him! Doesn't he do the family credit?" The boy wore the same sort of suit she had seen him go to work in day after day for years, ever since he took charge of the family's support.
>
> It was a great day for labor. It shows the power of the union. For over 1200 men marched to the sound of martial music that filled the streets . . . . As each union passed those already in line there were cheers of welcome, cheers of congratulations and cheers of pride. There is no rivalry between unions--only good fellowship. On the